







# **Collected Poems and Plays**

**SRI AUROBINDO**

**Vol. I.**

***SRI AUROBINDO ASRAM, PONDICHERRY***

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## PUBLISHER'S NOTE

*IN these two volumes are collected all the poetical works of Sri Aurobindo that have already been published in book-form or as isolated pieces or serially in periodicals. They are here arranged as far as possible in chronological group-order, for the dates of individual poems are not always ascertainable.*

*The first group begins with the poems written in Cambridge and London between 1890-1892 which, along with four or five others composed immediately after the return to India in 1893, were published in "Songs to Myrtilla;" among these early poems has been included the "Sonnet to Rajnarayan Bose." The narrative poem "Urvasie" belongs also to these early productions in India. "Love and Death" followed a few years afterwards. The work published in "Ahana and Other Poems" was written partly in this and partly in the following period; they are placed here along with the two dramas in an intermediate position between the first and second groups: "Ahana" the title poem written at Pondicherry and since recast and rewritten is in this collection separated and put at the end of the second group. The dramatic poem "Perseus the Deliverer" was written somewhere between the end of the nineties and the first years of the following decade. The date of composition of the translation of Kalidasa's "Vikramorvasie" is also doubtful, but it was done in Baroda, probably between 1903-1904.*

*The second group stretches through the period of political activity (from 1902-1910) and concludes with the first five years of retirement in Pondicherry. Most of these writings, "Baji Prabhou," "Vidula" and those published in the "Modern Review," "Karmayogin" and "Standard Bearer," were written in Calcutta and at Deoghar between 1905-1910; but the "Songs of the Sea" were translated from "Sagar-Sangit" at Pondicherry at the request of its author Chittaranjan Das, and the "Century of Life," a translation of Bhartrihari's "Nitisataka," was completed at the same time though most of it was done earlier, a few pieces having even been published in the Baroda College Magazine in the nineties. A number of other poems were written during the stay in Bengal but they were lost in the house-searches, trials, hasty displacements and other vicissitudes of those years of political action, among them two short narra-*

*tive pieces, a drama "The Viziers of Bassorah," a translation in terza rima of Kalidasa's "Cloud-Messenger," and renderings from the Mahabharata, the Ramayana and the Vaishnava poets.*

*The third group comprises work of the later period of retirement in Pondicherry, but we are able only to include twelve recent poems and two short translations. There is a great mass of poems written in the twenties and thirties and after, but never having been published, they fall outside the scope of this collection.*

*Most of the poems included in former book publications have been reproduced without any change, but minor alterations have been made in the narrative poem "Urvashie," some in the "Perseus" where, also, there are small additions and two long new passages; the end was found to be missing in the serial publication in the weekly "Bande Mataram," and this gap had to be filled. There are retouches in some of the isolated pieces, the "Mother of Dreams," "Kuthumi," etc.*

*This collected edition is now published to commemorate the 70th birthday of Sri Aurobindo which falls on August 15, 1942. The work here presented is only a small portion of what he has actually written, the bulk of which has not yet seen the light of day. Yet it is hoped that even this fragment will serve to give an idea of the poetic genius that seeks expression in it. Sri Aurobindo once said that he had been first and foremost a poet and a politician, only later he became a Yogi. We can safely amend the statement by saying that even before he became a politician he had been a poet, indeed he was born as a poet and he is a born poet. This aspect of Sri Aurobindo is not, at least has not been, so well known except in a small select circle; we trust that the wider literary public will now have an opportunity to taste of a genuine Pierian spring here disclosed to broad daylight.*

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# SONGS TO MYRTILLA AND OTHER POEMS

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*These early poems of  
Sri Aurobindo, all except five,  
written between his eighteenth  
and twentieth years (1890-92),  
were printed for private  
circulation at Baroda in 1895.*



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# SONGS TO MYRTILLA

## GLAUCUS

Sweet is the night, sweet and cool  
As to parched lips a running pool;  
Sweet when the flowers have fallen asleep  
And only moonlit rivulets creep  
Like glow-worms in the dim and whispering wood,  
To commune with the quiet heart and solitude.  
When earth is full of whispers, when  
No daily voice is heard of men,  
But higher audience brings  
The footsteps of invisible things,  
When o'er the glimmering tree-tops bowed  
The night is leaning on a luminous cloud,  
And always a melodious breeze  
Sings secret in the weird and charmed trees,  
Pleasant 'tis then heart-overawed to lie  
Alone with that clear moonlight and that listening sky.

## ÆTHON

But day is sweeter; morning bright  
Has put the stars out ere the light,  
And from their dewy cushions rise  
Sweet flowers half-opening their eyes.  
O pleasant then to feel as if new-born  
The sweet, unripe and virgin air, the air of morn.  
And pleasant are her melodies,  
Rustle of winds, rustle of trees,

Birds' voices in the eaves,  
Birds' voices in the green melodious leaves;  
The herdsman's flute among his flocks,  
Sweet water hurrying from reluctant rocks,  
And all sweet hours and all sweet showers  
And all sweet sounds that please the noonday flowers.  
Morning has pleasure, noon has golden peace  
And afternoon repose and eve the heart's increase.

All things are subject to sweet pleasure,  
But three things keep her richest measure.  
The breeze that visits heaven  
And knows the planets seven,  
The green spring with its flowery truth  
Creative and the luminous heart of youth.  
To all fair flowers and vernal  
The wind makes melody diurnal.  
On Ocean all night long  
He rests, a voice of song.  
The blue sea dances like a girl  
With sapphire and with pearl  
Crowning her locks. Sunshine and dew  
Each morn delicious life renew.  
The year is but a masque of flowers,  
Of light and song and honied showers.  
In the soft springtide comes the bird  
Of heaven whose speech is one sweet word;  
One word of sweet and magic power to bring  
Green branches back and ruddy lights of spring.  
Summer has pleasant comrades, happy meetings  
Of lily and rose and from the trees divinest greetings.

GLAUCUS

For who in April shall remember  
The certain end of drear November?

No flowers then live, no flowers  
 Make sweet those wretched hours;  
 From dead or grieving branches spun  
 Unwilling leaves lapse wearily one by one;  
 The heart is then in pain  
 With the unhappy sound of rain.  
 No secret boughs prolong  
 A green retreat of song;  
 Summer is dead and rich repose  
 And springtide and the rose,  
 And woods and all sweet things make moan;  
 The weeping earth is turned to stone.  
 The lovers of her former face,  
 Shapes of beauty, melody, grace,  
 Where are they? Butterfly and bird  
 No more are seen, no songs are heard.  
 They see her beauty spent, her splendours done;  
 They seek a younger earth, a surer sun.  
 When youth has quenched its soft and magic light,  
 Delightful things remain but dead is their delight.

### ÆTHON

Ah! for a little hour put by  
 Dim Hades and his pageantry.  
 Forget the future, leave the past,  
 The little hour thy life shall last.  
 Learn rather from the violet's days  
 Soft-blooming in retired ways  
 Or dewy bell, the maid undrest  
 With creamy childhood in her breast,  
 Fierce foxglove and the briony  
 And sapphire thyme, the work-room of the bee.  
 Behold in emerald fire  
 The spotted lizard crawl  
 Upon the sun-kissed wall

And coil in tangled brake  
The green and sliding snake  
Under the red-rose-briar.  
Nay, hither see  
Lured by thy rose of lips the bee  
To woo thy petals open, O sweet,  
His flowery murmur here repeat,  
Forsaking all the joys of thyme.  
Stain not thy perfumed prime  
With care for autumn's pale decay,  
But live like these thy sunny day.  
So when thy tender bloom must fall,  
Then shalt thou be as one who tasted all  
Life's honey and must now depart  
A broken prodigal from pleasure's mart,  
A leaf with whom each golden sunbeam sinned,  
A dewy leaf and kissed by every wandering wind.

GLAUCUS

How various are thy children, earth!  
Behold the rose her lovely birth,  
What fires from the bud proceed,  
As if the vernal air did bleed.  
Breezes and sunbeams, bees and dews  
Her lords and lovers she indues,  
And these her crimson pleasures prove;  
Her life is but a bath of love;  
The wide world perfumes when she sighs  
And, burning all the winds, of love she dies.  
The lily liveth pure,  
Yet has she lovers, friends,  
And each her bliss intends;  
The bees besides her treasure  
Besiege of pollened pleasure,  
Nor long her gates endure.



The snowdrop cold  
 Has vowed the saintly state to hold  
 And far from green spring's amorous guilds  
 Her snowy hermitage she builds.  
 Cowslip attends her vernal duty  
 And stops the heart with beauty.  
 The crocus asks no vernal thing,  
 But all the lovely lights of spring  
 Are with rich honeysuckle boon  
 And praise her through one summer moon.  
 Thus the sweet children of the earth  
 Fulfil their natural selves and various birth.  
 For one is proud and one sweet months approve  
 Diana's saint, but most are bondmaidens of Love.

Love's feet were on the sea  
 When he dawned on me.  
 His wings were purple-grained and slow;  
 His voice was very sweet and very low;  
 His rose-lit cheeks, his eyes' pale bloom  
 Were sorrow's anteroom;  
 His wings did cause melodious moan;  
 His mouth was like a rose o'erblown;  
 The cypress-garland of renown  
 Did make his shadowy crown.  
 Fair as the spring he gave  
 And sadder than a winter's wave  
 And sweet as sunless asphodel,  
 My shining lily, Florimel,  
 My heart's enhaloed moon,  
 My winter's warmth, my summer's shady boon.

### ÆTHON

Not from the mighty sea  
 Love visited me.

I found as in a jewelled box  
Love, rose-red, sleeping with imprisoned locks;  
And I have ever known him wild  
And merry as a child,  
As roses red, as roses sweet,  
The west wind in his feet,  
Tulip-girdled, kind and bold,  
With heartsease in his curls of gold,  
Since in the silver mist  
Bright Cymothœa's lips I kissed,  
Whose laughter dances like a gleam  
Of sunlight on a hidden stream  
That through a wooded way  
Runs suddenly into the perfect day.  
But what were Cymothœa, placed  
Where like a silver star Myrtilla blooms?  
Such light as cressets cast  
In long and sun-lit rooms.  
Thy presence is to her  
As oak to juniper,  
Thy beauty as the gorgeous rose  
To privet by the lane that blows,  
Gold-crownèd blooms to mere fresh grass,  
Eternal ivy to brief blooms that pass.

GLAUCUS

But Florimel beside thee, sweet,  
Pales like a candle in the brilliant noon.  
Snowdrops are thy feet,  
Thy waist a crescent moon,  
And like a silver wand  
Thy body slight doth stand  
Or like a silver beech aspire.  
Thine arms are walls for white caresses,  
Thy mouth a tale of crimson kisses,

Thine eyes two amorous treasures of fire.  
To what shall poet liken thee?  
Art thou a goddess of the sea  
Purple-tressed and laughter-lipped  
From thy choric sisters slipped  
To wander on the flowery land?  
Or art thou siren on the treacherous sand  
Summer-voiced to charm the ear  
Of the wind-vested mariner?  
Ah! but what are these to thee,  
Brighter gem than knows the sea,  
Lovelier girl than sees the stream  
Naked, Naiad of a dream,  
Whiter Dryad than men see  
Dancing round the lone oak-tree,  
Flower and most enchanting birth  
Of ten ages of the earth!  
The Graces in thy body move  
And in thy lips the ruby hue of Love.

## O Coïl, Coïl

O coïl, honied envoy of the spring,  
Cease thy too happy voice, grief's record, cease:  
For I recall that day of vernal trees,  
The soft asoca's bloom, the laden winds  
And green felicity of leaves, the hush,  
The sense of Nature living in the woods.  
Only the river rippled, only hummed  
The languid murmuring bee, far-borne and slow,  
Emparadised in odours, only used  
The ringdove his divine heart-moving speech;  
But sweetest to my pleased and singing heart  
Thy voice, O coïl, in the peepel tree.

O me! for pleasure turned to bitterest tears!  
O me! for the swift joy, too great to live,  
That only bloomed one hour! O wondrous day,  
That crowned the bliss of those delicious years.  
The vernal radiance of my lover's lips  
Was shut like a red rose upon my mouth,  
His voice was richer than the murmuring leaves,  
His love around me than the summer air.  
Five hours entangled in the coïl's cry  
Lay my beloved twixt my happy breasts.  
O voice of tears! O sweetness uttering death!  
O lost ere yet that happy cry was still!

O tireless voice of spring! Again I lie  
In odorous gloom of trees; unseen and near  
The windlark gurgles in the golden leaves,  
The woodworm spins in shrillness on the bough:

Thou by the waters wailing to thy love,  
O chocrobacque! have comfort, since to thee  
The dawn brings sweetest recompense of tears  
And she thou lovest hears thy pain. But I  
Am desolate in the heart of fruitful months,  
Am widowed in the sight of happy things,  
Uttering my moan to the unhousèd winds,  
O coil, coil, to the winds and thee.

## Goethe

A perfect face amid barbarian faces,  
A perfect voice of sweet and serious rhyme,  
Traveller with calm, inimitable paces,  
Critic with judgment absolute to all time,  
A complete strength when men were maimed and weak,  
German obscured the spirit of a Greek.

## **The Lost Deliverer**

Pythian he came; repressed beneath his heel  
The hydra of the world with bruised head.  
Vainly, since Fate's immeasurable wheel  
Could parley with a straw. A weakling sped  
The bullet when to custom's usual night  
We fell because a woman's faith was light.

**Charles Stewart Parnell**

**1891**

O pale and guiding light, now star unsphered,  
Deliverer lately hailed, since by our lords  
Most feared, most hated, hated because feared,  
Who smot'st them with an edge surpassing swords!  
Thou too wert then a child of tragic earth,  
Since vainly filled thy luminous doom of birth.

## Hic Jacet

*Glasnevin Cemetery*

Patriots, behold your guerdon. This man found  
 Erin, his mother, bleeding, chastised, bound,  
 Naked to imputation, poor, denied,  
 While alien masters held her house of pride.  
 And now behold her! Terrible and fair  
 With the eternal ivy in her hair,  
 Armed with the clamorous thunder, how she stands  
 Like Pallas' self the Gorgon in her hands.  
 True that her puissance will be easily past,  
 The vision ended; she herself has cast  
 Her fate behind her: yet the work not vain  
 Since that which once has been may be again,  
 And she this image yet recover, fired  
 With godlike workings, brain and hands inspired,  
 So stand, the blush of battle on her cheek,  
 Voice made armipotent, deeds that loudly speak,  
 Like some dread Sphinx, half patent to the eye,  
 Half veiled in formidable secrecy.  
 And he who raised her from her forlorn life  
 Loosening the fountains of that mighty strife,  
 Where sits he? On what high foreshadowing throne  
 Guarded by grateful hearts? Beneath this stone  
 He lies: this guerdon only Ireland gave,  
 A broken heart and an unhonoured grave.

## Lines on Ireland 1896

After six hundred years did Fate intend  
Her perfect perseverance thus should end?  
So many years she strove, so many years,  
Enduring toil, enduring bitter tears,  
She waged religious war, with sword and song  
Insurgent against Fate and numbers, strong  
To inflict as to sustain; her weak estate  
Could not conceal the goddess in her gait;  
Goddess her mood. Therefore that light was she  
In whom races of weaker destiny  
Their beauteous image of rebellion saw;  
Treason could not unnerve, violence o'erawe—  
A mirror to enslaved nations, never  
O'ercome, though in the field defeated ever.  
O mutability of human merit!  
How changed, how fallen from her ancient spirit!  
She that was Ireland, Ireland now no more,  
In beggar's weeds behold at England's door  
Neglected sues or at the best returned  
With hollow promise, happy if not spurned  
Perforce, she that had yesterday disdained  
Less than her mighty purpose to have gained.  
Had few short change of seasons puissance then,  
O nurse and mother of heroic men,  
Thy genius to outwear, thy strength well-placed  
And old traditionary courage, waste  
Thy vehement nature? Nay, not time, but thou  
These ancient praises strov'st to disavow.



For 'tis not foreign force, nor weight of wars,  
 Nor treason, nor surprise, nor opposite stars,  
 Not all these have enslaved nor can, whate'er  
 Vulgar opinion bruit, nor years impair,  
 Ruin discourage, nor disease abate  
 A nation. Men are fathers of their fate;  
 They dig the prison, they the crown command.  
 Yet thine own self a little understand,  
 Unhappy country, and be wise at length.  
 An outward weakness doing deeds of strength  
 Amazed the nations, but a power within  
 Directed, like effective spirit unseen  
 Behind the mask of trivial forms, a source  
 And fund of tranquil and collected force.  
 This was the sense that made thee royal, blessed  
 With sanction from on high and that impressed  
 Which could thyself transfigure and infuse  
 Thine action with such pride as kings do use.  
 But thou to thine own self disloyal, hast  
 Renounced the help divine turning thy past  
 To idle legends and fierce tales of blood,  
 Mere violent wrath with no proposèd good.  
 Therefore effective wisdom, skill to bend  
 All human things to one predestined end  
 Renounce thee. Honest purpose, labour true,  
 These dwell not with the self-appointed crew  
 Who, having conquered by death's aid, abuse  
 The public ear,—for seldom men refuse  
 Credence, when mediocrity multiplied  
 Equals itself with genius—fools! whose pride  
 Absurd the gods permit a little space  
 To please their souls with laughter, then replace  
 In the loud limbo of futilities.  
 How fallen art thou being ruled by these!

Ignoble hearts, courageous to effect  
Their country's ruin; such the heavens reject  
For their high agencies and leave exempt  
Of force, mere mouths and vessels of contempt.  
They of thy famous past and nature real  
Uncareful, have denied thy rich ideal  
For private gains, the burden would not brook  
Of that sustaining genius, when it took  
A form of visible power, since it demanded  
All meaner passions for its sake disbanded.  
As once against the loud Euphratic host  
The lax Ionians of the Asian coast  
Drew out their numbers, but not long enduring  
Rigorous hard-hearted toil to the alluring  
Cool shadow of the olives green withdrew;  
Freedom's preparators though well they knew  
Labour exact, discipline, pains well nerved  
In the severe unpitying sun, yet swerved  
From their ordeal; Ireland so deceiving  
The world's great hope, her temples large relieving  
Of the too heavy laurel, rather chose  
Misery, civil battle, triumphant foes  
Than rational order and divine control.  
Therefore her brighter fate and nobler soul  
Glasnevin with that hardly-honoured bier  
Received. But the immortal mind austere,  
By man rejected, of eternal praise  
Has won its meed and sits with heavenly bays,  
Not variable breath of favour, crowned  
On high. And grieves it not, spirit renowned,  
Mortal ingratitude though now forgiven,  
Grieves it not, even on the hills of heaven,  
After so many mighty toils, defeats  
So many, cold repulse and vernal heats

Of hope, iron endurance throned apart  
In lonely strength within thy godlike heart,  
Obloquy faced, health lost, the goal nigh won,  
To see at last thy strenuous work undone?  
So falls it ever when a race condemned  
To strict and lasting bondage, have contemned  
Their great deliverer, self and ease preferring  
To labour's crown, by their own vileness erring.  
Thus the uncounselled Isrælitites of old,  
Binding their mightiest, for their own ease sold,  
Who else had won them glorious liberty  
To his Philistian foes, as thine did thee.  
Thou likewise, had thy puissant soul endured  
Within its ruined house to stay immured,  
With parallel disaster and o'erthrow  
Hadst daunted and their conjured strength laid low.  
But time was adverse. Thus too Heracles  
In exile closed by the Olynthian seas,  
Not seeing Thebes nor Dirce any more,  
His friendless eyelids on an alien shore.  
Yet not unbidden of heaven the men renowned  
Have laboured, though no fruit apparent crowned  
Nor praise contemporary touched with leaf  
Of civic favour, who for joy or grief  
To throned injustice never bowed the head.  
They triumph from the houses of the dead.  
Thou too, high spirit, mighty genius, glass  
Of patriots, into others' deeds shalt pass  
With force and tranquil fortitude thy dower,  
An inspiration and a fount of power.  
Nor to thy country only nor thy day  
Art thou a name and a possession, stay  
Of loftiest natures, but where'er and when  
In time's full ripeness and the date of men

Alien oppression maddened has the wise,—  
For ever thus preparing Nemesis  
In ruling nations unjust power has borne  
Insolence, injustice, madness, outrage, scorn,  
Its natural children, then, by high disdain  
And brave example pushed to meet their pain,  
The pupils of thy greatness shall appear,  
Souls regal to the mould divine most near,  
And reign, or rise on throne-intending wings,  
Making thee father to a line of kings.

## On a Satyr and Sleeping Love

Me whom the purple mead that Bromius owns  
And girdles rent of amorous girls did please,  
Now the inspired and curious hand decrees  
That waked quick life in these quiescent stones,  
To yield thee water pure. Thou lest the sleep  
Yon perilous boy unchain, more softly creep.

PLATO.

## A Rose of Women

Now lilies blow upon the windy height,  
Now flowers the pansy kissed by tender rain,  
Narcissus builds his house of self-delight  
And Love's own fairest flower blooms again;  
Vainly your gems, O meadows, you recall;  
One simple girl breathes sweeter than you all.

MELEAGER.

## Saraswati with the Lotus

(*Bankim Chandra Chatterji. Obitt 1894*)

Thy tears fall fast, O mother, on its bloom,  
O white-armed mother, like honey fall thy tears;  
Yet even their sweetness can no more relume  
The golden light, the fragrance heaven rears,  
The fragrance and the light for ever shed  
Upon his lips immortal who is dead.

## Night by the Sea

Love, a moment drop thy hands;  
Night within my soul expands.  
Veil thy beauties milk-rose-fair  
In that dark and showering hair.  
Coral kisses ravish not  
When the soul is tinged with thought;  
Burning looks are then forbid.  
Let each shyly-parted lid  
Hover like a settling dove  
O'er those deep-blue wells of Love.  
Darkness brightens; silvering flee  
Pomps of foam the driven sea.

In this garden's dim repose  
Lighted with the burning rose,  
Soft narcissi's golden camp  
Glimmering or with rosier lamp  
Censured honeysuckle guessed  
By the fragrance of her breast,—  
Here where summer's hands have crowned  
Silence in the fields of sound,  
Here felicity should be.  
Hearken, Edith, to the sea.

What a voice of grief intrudes  
On these happy solitudes!  
To the wind that with him dwells  
Ocean, old historian, tells  
All the dreadful heart of tears  
Hidden in the pleasant years.

Summer's children, what do ye  
By the stern and cheerless sea?

Not we first nor we alone  
Heard the mighty Ocean moan  
By this treasure-house of flowers  
In the sweet ambiguous hours.  
Many a girl's lips ruby-red  
With their vernal honey fed  
Happy mouths, and soft cheeks flushed  
With Love's rosy sunlight blushed.  
Ruddy lips of many a boy  
Blithe discovered hills of joy  
Ruby-guided through a kiss  
To the sweet highways of bliss.  
Here they saw the evening still  
Coming slowly from the hill  
And the patient stars arise  
To their outposts in the skies;  
Heard the ocean shoreward urge  
The speed and thunder of his surge,  
Singing heard as though a bee  
Noontide waters on the sea.  
These no longer. For our rose  
In her place they wreathed once, blows,  
And thy glorious garland, sweet,  
Kissed not once those wandering feet.  
All the lights of spring are ended,  
To the wintry haven wended.  
Beauty's boons and nectarous leisure,  
Lips, the honeycombs of pleasure,  
Cheeks enrosed, Love's natal soil,  
Breasts, the ardent conqueror's spoil,  
Spring rejects; a lovelier child  
His brittle fancies has beguiled.

O her name that to repeat  
Than the Dorian muse more sweet  
Could the white hand more relume  
Writing and refresh the bloom  
Of lips that used such syllables then,  
Dies unloved by later men.  
Are we more than summer flowers?  
Shall a longer date be ours,  
Rose and springtime, youth and we  
By the everlasting sea?

Are they blown as legends tell  
In the smoke and gurge of hell?  
Writhe they in relucant gyres  
O'er a circle sad of fires?  
In what lightless groves must they  
Or un murmuring alleys stray?  
Fields no sunlight visits, streams  
Where no happy lotus gleams?  
Yet, where'er their steps below,  
Memories sweet for comrades go.  
Lethe's waters had their will,  
But the soul remembers still.  
Beauty pays her boon of breath  
To thy narrow credit, Death,  
Leaving a brief perfume; we  
Perish also by the sea.

We shall lose, ah me! too soon  
Lose the clear and silent moon,  
The serenities of night  
And the deeper evening light.  
We shall know not when the morn  
In the widening East is born,



Never feel the west-wind stir,  
 Spring's delightful messenger,  
 Never under branches lain  
 Dally with the sweet-lipped rain,  
 Watch the moments of the tree,  
 Nor know the sounds that tread the sea.

With thy kisses chase this gloom:—  
 Thoughts, the children of the tomb.  
 Kiss me, Edith. Soon the night  
 Comes and hides the happy light.  
 Nature's vernal darlings dead  
 From new founts of life are fed.  
 Dawn relumes the immortal skies.  
 Ah! what boon for earth-closed eyes?  
 Love's sweet debts are standing, sweet;  
 Honied payment to complete  
 Haste—a million is to pay—  
 Lest too soon the allotted day  
 End and we oblivious keep  
 Darkness and eternal sleep.  
 See! the moon from heaven falls.  
 In thy bosom's snow-white walls  
 Softly and supremely housed  
 Shut my heart up; keep it closed  
 Like a rose of Indian grain,  
 Like that rose against the rain,  
 Closed to all that life applauds,  
 Nature's perishable gauds,  
 And the airs that burdened be  
 With such thoughts as shake the sea.

## The Lover's Complaint

O plaintive, murmuring reed, begin thy strain;  
    Unloose that heavenly tongue,  
    Interpreter divine of pain;  
Utter thy voice, the sister of my song.  
Thee in the silver waters growing,  
Arcadian Pan, strange whispers blowing  
Into thy delicate stops, did teach  
A language lovelier than speech.

O plaintive, murmuring reed, begin thy strain;  
    O plaintive, murmuring reed.  
    Nisa to Mopsus is decreed,  
The moonwhite Nisa to a swarthy swain.  
What love-gift now shall Hope not bring?  
Election dwells no more with beauty's king.  
The wild weed now has wed the rose,  
Now ivy on the bramble grows;  
Too happy lover, fill the lamp of bliss!  
Too happy lover, drunk with Nisa's kiss!  
For thee pale Cynthia leaves her golden car,  
For thee from Tempe stoops the white and evening star.

O plaintive, murmuring reed, renew thy strain;  
    O solace anguish yet again.  
    I thought Love soft as velvet sleep,  
Sweeter than dew's nocturnal breezes weep,  
Cool as water in a murmuring pass  
And shy as violets in the vernal grass,  
But hard as Nisa's heart is he  
And salt as the unharvestable sea.

O plaintive, murmuring reed, renew thy strain.

One morn she came; her mouth  
Breathing the odours of the south,  
With happy eyes and heaving bosom fain.  
She asked for fruit long-stored in autumn's hold.  
These gave I; from the branch dislodged I threw  
Sweet-hearted apples in their age of gold  
And pears divine for taste and hue.  
And one I saw, should all the rest excel;  
But error led my plucking hand astray  
And with a sudden sweet dismay  
My heart into her apron fell.

O plaintive, murmuring reed, renew thy strain.

My bleeding heart awhile  
She kept and bloomed upon its pain,  
Then slighted as a broken thing and vile.  
Now Mopsus in his unblest arms,  
Mopsus enfolds her heavenlier charms,  
Mopsus to whom the Muse averse  
Refused her gracious secrets to rehearse.

O plaintive, murmuring reed, breathe yet thy strain.

Ye glades, your bliss I grudge you not,  
Nor would I that my grief profane  
Your sacred summer with intruding thought.  
Yet since I will no more behold  
Your glorious beauty stained with gold  
From shadows of her hair, nor by some well  
Made naked of their sylvan dress  
The breasts, the limbs I never shall possess,  
Therefore, O mother Arethuse, farewell.

For me no place abides  
By the green verge of thy belovèd tides.  
To Lethe let my footsteps go  
And wailing waters in the realms below,  
Where happier song is none than moaning pain  
Nor any lovelier Syrinx than the weed.  
Child of the lisping waters, hush thy strain,  
O murmuring, plaintive reed.

## Love in Sorrow

Do you remember, Love, that sunset pale  
When from near meadows sad with mist the breeze  
Sighed like a feverous soul and with soft wail  
The ghostly river sobbed among the trees?  
I think that Nature heard our misery  
Weep to itself and wept for sympathy.

For we were strangers then; we knew not Fate  
In ambush by the solitary stream  
Nor did our sorrows hope to find a mate,  
Much less of love or friendship dared we dream.  
Rather we thought that loneliness and we  
Were wed in marble perpetuity.

For there was none who loved me, no, not one.  
Alas, what was there that a man should love?  
For I was misery's last and frailest son  
And even my mother bade me homeless rove.

And I had wronged my youth and nobler powers  
By weak attempts, small failures, wasted hours.

Therefore I laid my cheek on the chill grass  
And murmured, "I am overborne with grief  
And joy to richer natures hopes to pass.

Oh me! my life is like an aspen leaf  
That shakes but will not fall. My thoughts are blind  
And life so bitter that death seems almost kind.

"How am I weary of the days' increase,  
Of the moon's brightness and the splendid stars,  
The sun that dies not. I would be at peace,  
Nor blind my soul with images, nor force  
My lips to mirth whose later taste is death,  
Nor with vain utterance load my weary breath."

Thus murmured I aloud nor deemed I spoke  
To human ears, but you were hidden, sweet,  
Behind the willows when my plaining broke  
Upon your lonely muse. Ah kindly feet  
That brushed the grass in tender haste to bind  
Another's wounds, you were less wise than kind.

You said, "My brother, lift your forlorn eyes;  
I am your sister more than you unblest."  
I looked upon your face, the book of sighs  
And index to incurable unrest.  
I rose and kissed you, sweet. Your lips were warm  
And drew my heart out like a witch's charm.

We parted where the sacred spires arose  
In silent power above the silent street.  
I saw you mid the rose-trees, O white rose,  
Linger a moment, then the dusk defeat

My eyes, and, listening, heard your footsteps fade  
On the sad leaves of the autumnal glade.

And were you happy, sweet? In me I know—  
For either in my blood the autumn sang  
His own pale requiem or that new sweet glow  
Failed in the light of bitter knowledge—rang  
A voice that said, “Behold the loves too pure  
To live, the joy that never shall endure.”

This too I know, nor is my hope so bright  
But that it sees its autumn cold and sere  
Attending with a pale and solemn light  
Beyond the gardens of the vernal year.  
Yet will I not my weary heart constrain  
But take you, sweet, and sweet surcease from pain.

## The Island Grave

Ocean is there and evening; the slow moan  
Of the blue waves that like a shaken robe  
Two heard together once, one hears alone.

Now gliding white and hushed towards our globe  
Keen January with cold eyes and clear  
And snowdrops pendent in each frosty lobe

Ushers the firstborn of the radiant year.  
Haply his feet that grind the breaking mould,  
May brush the dead grass on thy secret bier,

Haply his joyless fingers wan and cold  
Caress the ruined masses of thy hair,  
Pale child of winter, dead ere youth was old.

Art thou so desolate in that bitter air  
That even his breath feels warm upon thy face?  
Ah till the daffodil is born, forbear,

And I will meet thee in that lonely place.  
Then the grey dawn shall end my hateful days  
And death admit me to the silent ways.

## Estelle

Why do thy lucid eyes survey,  
Estelle, their sisters in the milky way?  
The blue heavens cannot see  
Thy beauty nor the planets praise.  
Blindly they walk their old accustomed ways.  
Turn hither for felicity.  
My body's earth thy vernal power declares,  
My spirit is a heaven of thousand stars,  
And all these lights are thine and open doors on thee.



## Radha's Complaint in Absence

*[Imitated from the Bengali of Chundīdas]*

O heart, my heart, a heavy pain is thine!  
What land is that where none doth know  
Love's cruel name nor any word of sin?  
My heart, there let us go.

Friend of my soul, who then has called love sweet?  
Laughing I called from heavenly spheres  
The sweet love close; he came with flying feet  
And turned my life to tears.

What highborn girl, exiling virgin pride,  
Has wooed love to her with a laugh?  
His fires shall burn her as in harvest-tide  
The mowers burn the chaff.

O heart, my heart, merry thy sweet youth ran  
In fields where no love was; thy breath  
Is anguish, since his cruel reign began.  
What other cure but death?

## Radha's Appeal

*[Imitated from the Bengali of Chundidas]*

O love, what more shall I, shall Radha speak,  
Since mortal words are weak?

In life, in death,  
In being and in breath  
No other lord but thee can Radha seek.

About thy feet the mighty net is wound  
Wherein my soul they bound;  
Myself resigned  
To servitude my mind;  
My heart than thine no sweeter slavery found.

I, Radha, thought; through the three worlds my gaze  
I sent in wild amaze;

I was alone.  
None called me "Radha!", none;  
I saw no hand to clasp, no friendly face.

I sought my father's house; my father's sight  
Was empty of delight;  
No tender friend  
Her loving voice would lend;  
My cry came back unanswered from the night.

Therefore to this sweet sanctuary I brought  
My chilled and shuddering thought.  
Ah, suffer, sweet,  
To thy most faultless feet  
That I should cling unchid; ah, spurn me not!

Spurn me not, dear, from thy beloved breast,  
 A woman weak, unblest.  
     Thus let me cling,  
 Thus, thus about my king  
 And thus remain caressing and caressed.

I, Radha, thought; without my life's sweet lord,  
 —Strike now thy mightiest chord—  
     I had no power  
 To live one simple hour;  
 His absence slew my soul as with a sword.

If one brief moment steal thee from mine eyes,  
 My heart within me dies.  
     As girls who keep  
 The treasures of the deep,  
 I string thee round my neck and on my bosom prize.

## Bankim Chandra Chatterji

How hast thou lost, O month of honey and flowers,  
 The voice that was thy soul! Creative showers,  
 The cuckoo's daylong cry and moan of bees,  
 Zephyrs and streams and softly-blossoming trees  
 And murmuring laughter and heart-easing tears  
 And tender thoughts and great and the compeers  
 Of lily and jasmine and melodious birds,  
 All these thy children into lovely words  
 He changed at will and made soul-moving books  
 From hearts of men and women's honied looks.

O master of delicious words! the bloom  
Of chompuk and the breath of king-perfume  
Have made each musical sentence with the noise  
Of women's ornaments and sweet household joys  
And laughter tender as the voice of leaves  
Playing with vernal winds. The eye receives  
That reads these lines an image of delight,  
A world with shapes of spring and summer, noon and night;  
All nature in a page, no pleasing show  
But men more real than the friends we know.  
O plains, O hills, O rivers of sweet Bengal,  
O land of love and flowers, the spring-bird's call  
And southern wind are sweet among your trees:  
Your poet's words are sweeter far than these.  
Your heart was this man's heart. Subtly he knew  
The beauty and divinity in you.  
His nature kingly was and as a god  
In large serenity and light he trod  
His daily way, yet beauty, like soft flowers  
Wreathing a hero's sword, ruled all his hours.  
Thus moving in these iron times and drear,  
Barren of bliss and robbed of golden cheer,  
He sowed the desert with ruddy-hearted rose,  
The sweetest voice that ever spoke in prose.

## Madhusudan Dutt

Poet, who first with skill inspired did teach  
 Greatness to our divine Bengali speech,—  
 Divine, but rather with delightful moan  
 Spring's golden mother makes when twin-alone  
 She lies with golden Love and heaven's birds  
 Call hymeneal with enchanting words  
 Over their passionate faces, rather these  
 Than with the calm and grandiose melodies  
 (Such calm as consciousness of godhead owns)  
 The high gods speak upon their ivory thrones  
 Sitting in council high,—till taught by thee  
 Fragrance and noise of the world-shaking sea.  
 Thus do they praise thee who amazed espy  
 Thy winged epic and hear the arrows cry  
 And journeyings of alarmed gods; and due  
 The praise, since with great verse and numbers new  
 Thou mad'st her godlike who was only fair.  
 And yet my heart more perfectly ensnare  
 Thy soft impassioned flutes and more thy Muse  
 To wander in the honied months doth choose  
 Than courts of kings, with Sita in the grove  
 Of happy blossoms, (O musical voice of love  
 Murmuring sweet words with sweeter sobs between!)  
 With Shoorpa in the Vindhyan forests green  
 Laying her wonderful heart upon the sod  
 Made holy by the well-loved feet that trod  
 Its vocal shades; and more unearthly bright  
 Thy jewelled songs made of relucant light

Wherein the birds of spring and summer and all flowers  
And murmuring waters flow, her widowed hours  
Making melodious who divinely loved.  
No human hands such notes ambrosial moved;  
These accents are not of the imperfect earth;  
Rather the god was voiceful in their birth,  
The god himself of the enchanting flute,  
The god himself took up thy pen and wrote.

## Transiit, Non Periiit

*[My grandfather, Rajnarayan Bose, died September 1899]*

Not in annihilation lost, nor given  
To darkness art thou fled from us and light,  
O strong and sentient spirit; no mere heaven  
Of ancient joys, no silence eremite  
Received thee; but the omnipresent Thought  
Of which thou wast a part and earthly hour,  
Took back its gift. Into that splendour caught  
Thou hast not lost thy special brightness. Power  
Remains with thee and the old genial force  
Unseen for blinding light, not darkly lurks:  
As when a sacred river in its course  
Dives into ocean, there its strength abides  
Not less because with vastness wed and works  
Unnoticed in the grandeur of the tides.

## To the Cuckoo

Sounds of the wakening world, the year's increase,  
Passage of wind and all his dewy powers  
With breath and laughter of new-bathed flowers  
And that deep light of heaven above the trees  
Awake mid leaves that muse in golden peace  
Sweet noise of birds, but most in heavenly showers  
The cuckoo's voice pervades the lucid hours,  
Is priest and summoner of these melodies.  
The spent and weary streams refresh their youth  
At that creative rain and barren groves  
Regain their face of flowers; in thee the ruth  
Of Nature wakening her dead children moves.  
But chiefly to renew thou hast the art  
Fresh childhood in the obscured human heart.

## Envoi

*Ite hinc, Camenae, vos quoque ite jam, sane  
Dulces Camenae, nam fatebimur verum  
Dulces fuistis, et tamen meas chartas  
Revisitote sed pudenter et raro.*

Pale poems, weak and few, who vainly use  
Your wings towards the unattainable spheres,  
Offspring of the divine Hellenic Muse,  
Poor maimèd children born of six disastrous years!

Not as your mother's is your wounded grace,  
Since not to me with equal love returned  
The hope which drew me to that serene face  
Wherein no unrepòseful light of effort burned.

Depart and live for seasons many or few  
If live you may, but stay not here to pain  
My heart with hopeless passion and renew  
Visions of beauty that my lips shall ne'er attain.

For in Sicilian olive-groves no more  
Or seldom must my footprints now be seen,  
Nor tread Athenian lanes, nor yet explore  
Parnassus or thy voiceful shores, O Hippocrene.

Me from her lotus heaven Saraswati  
Has called to regions of eternal snow  
And Ganges pacing to the southern sea,  
Ganges upon whose shores the flowers of Eden blow.



# URVASIE





# Urvasie

## CANTO I

Pururavus from Titan conflict ceased  
Turned worldwards, through illimitable space  
Had travelled like a star 'twixt earth and heaven  
Slowly and brightly. Late our mortal air  
He breathed; for downward now the hooves divine  
Trampling out fire with sound before them went,  
And the great earth rushed up towards him, green.  
With the first line of dawn he touched the peaks,  
Nor paused upon those savage heights, but reached  
Inferior summits subject to the rain,  
And rested. Looking northwards thence he saw  
The giant snows upclimbing to the sky,  
And felt the mighty silence. In his ear  
The noise of a retreating battle was,  
Wide crash of wheels and hard impetuous blare  
Of trumpets and the sullen march of hosts.  
Therefore with joy he drank into his soul  
The virgin silence inaccessible  
Of mountains and divined his mother's breasts.  
But as he listened to the hush, a thought  
Came to him from the spring and he turned round  
And gazed into the quiet maiden East,  
Watching that birth of day, as if a line  
Of some great poem out of dimness grew,  
Slowly unfolding into perfect speech.  
The grey lucidity and pearliness  
Bloomed more and more, and over earth chaste again  
The freshness of the primal dawn returned,

Life coming with a virginal sharp strength,  
 Renewed as from the streams of Paradise.  
 Nearer it drew now to him and he saw  
 Out of the widening glory move a face  
 Of dawn, a body fresh from mystery,  
 Enveloped with a prophecy of light  
 More rich than perfect splendours. It was she,  
 The golden virgin, Usha, mother of life,  
 Yet virgin. In a silence sweet she came,  
 Unveiled, soft-smiling, like a bride, rose-cheeked,  
 Her bosom full of flowers, the morning wind  
 Stirring her hair and all about her gold.  
 Nor sole she came. Behind her faces laughed  
 Delicious, girls of heaven whose beauties ease  
 The labour of the battle-weary Gods;  
 They in the golden dawn of things sprang gold,  
 From youth of the immortal Ocean born,  
 They youthful and immortal, and the waves  
 Were in their feet and in their voices fresh  
 As foam, and Ocean in their souls was love.  
 Laughing they ran among the clouds, their hair  
 And raiment all a tempest in the breeze.  
 The sky grew glorious with them and their feet  
 A restless loveliness and glad eyes full  
 Of morning and divine faces bent back  
 For the imperious kisses of the wind.  
 So danced they numberless as dew-drops gleam,  
 Ménaca, Misracayshie, Mullica,  
 Rumbha, Nelabha, Shela, Nolinie,  
 Lolita, Lavonya and Tilôttama,—  
 Many delightful names; among them she.  
 And seeing her Pururavus the king  
 Shuddered as of felicity afraid,  
 And all the wide heart of Pururavus  
 Moved like the sea—when with a coming wind

Great Ocean lifts in far expectancy  
 Waiting to feel the shock, so was he moved  
 By expectation of her face. For this  
 Was secret in its own divinity  
 Like a high sun of splendour, or half seen  
 All troubled with her hair. Yet Paradise  
 Breathed from her limbs and tresses wonderful,  
 With odours and with dreams. Then for a space  
 Voiceless the great king stood and, troubled, watched  
 That lovely advent, laughter and delight  
 Gaining upon the world. At last he sighed  
 And the vague passion broke from him in speech  
 Heard by the solitude. "O thou strong god,  
 Who art thou graspest me with hands of fire,  
 Making my soul all colour? Surely I thought  
 The hills would move and the eternal stars  
 Deviate from their rounds immutable,  
 Never Pururavus; yet lo! I fall.  
 My soul whirls alien and I hear amazed  
 The galloping of uncontrollable steeds.  
 Men said of me: 'The King Pururavus  
 Grows more than man; he lifts to azure heaven  
 In vast equality his spirit sublime,'  
 Why sink I now towards attractive earth?  
 And thou, who art thou, mystery! golden wonder!  
 Moving enchantress! Wast thou not a part  
 Of soft auspicious evenings I have loved?  
 Have I not seen thy beauty on the clouds?  
 In moonlight and in starlight and in fire?  
 Some flower whose brightness was a trouble? a face  
 Whose memory like a picture lived with me?  
 A thought I had, but lost? O was thy voice  
 A vernal repetition in some grove,  
 Telling of lilies clustered o'er with bees  
 And quiet waters open to the moon?

Surely in some past life I loved thy name,  
 And syllable by syllable now strive  
 Its sweetness to recall. It seems the grace  
 Of visible things, of hushed and lonely snows  
 And burning great inexorable noons,  
 And towns and valleys and the mountain winds.  
 All beauty of earthliness is in thee, all  
 Luxurious experience of the soul.  
 O comest thou because I left thy charm  
 Aiming at purity, Oh comest thou,  
 Goddess, to avenge thyself with beauty? Come!  
 Unveil thyself from light! limit thyself,  
 O infinite grace, that I may find, may clasp.  
 For surely in my heart I know thou bearest  
 A name that naturally weds with mine,  
 And I perceive our union magically  
 Inevitable as a perfect verse  
 Of Veda. Set thy feet upon my heart,  
 O Goddess! woman, to my bosom move!  
 I am Pururavus, O Urvasie."  
 As when a man to the grey face of dawn  
 Awaking from an unremembered dream,  
 Repines at life awhile and buffets back  
 The wave of old familiar thoughts, and hating  
 His usual happiness and usual cares  
 Strives to recall a dream's felicity;—  
 Long strives in vain and rolls his painful thought  
 Through many alien ways, when sudden comes  
 A flash, another, and the vision burns  
 Like lightning in the brain, so leaped that name  
 Into the musing of the troubled king.  
 Joyous he cried aloud and lashed his steeds:  
 They, rearing, leaped from Himalaya high  
 And trampled with their hooves the southern wind.  
 But now a cry broke from the lovely crowd

Of fear and tremulous astonishment;  
And they huddled together like doves dismayed  
Who see the inevitable talons near  
And rush of cruel wings. 'Twas not from him,  
For him they saw not yet, but from the north  
A fear was on them, and Pururavus  
Heard a low roar as of a distant cloud.  
He turned half-wrathful. In the far north-west  
Heaven stood thick, concentrated in gloom,  
Darkness in darkness hidden; for the cloud  
Rose firmament on sullen firmament,  
As if all brightness to entomb. Across  
Great thundrous whispers rolled, and lightning quivered  
From edge to edge, a savage pallor. Down  
The south wind dropped appalled. Then for a while  
Stood pregnant with the thunderbolt and wearing  
Rain like a colour, the monumental cloud  
Sublime and voiceless. Long the heart was stilled  
And the ear waited listening. Suddenly  
From motionless battalions as outride  
A speed disperse of horsemen, from that mass  
Of livid menace went a frail light cloud  
Rushing through heaven, and behind it streamed  
The downpour all in wet and greenish lines.  
Swift rushed the splendid anarchy admired,  
And reached, and broke, and with a roar of rain  
And tumult on the wings of wind and clasp  
Of the o'erwhelmed horizons and with bursts  
Of thunder breaking all the body with sound  
And lightning 'twixt the eyes intolerable,  
Like heaven's vast eagle all that blackness swept  
Down over the inferior snowless heights  
And swallowed up the dawn. Pururavus,  
Lost in the streaming tumult, stood amazed:  
But as he watched, he was aware of locks

Flying and a wild face and terrible  
And fierce familiar eyes. Again he looked  
And knew him in a hundred battles crossed,  
The giant Cayshie. It seemed but yesterday  
That over the waves of fight their angry eyes  
Had met. He in the dim disguise of rain,  
All swift with storm, came passionate and huge,  
Filling the regions with himself. Immense  
He stooped upon the brides of heaven. They  
Like flowers in a gust scattered and blown  
Fled every way; but he upon that beauty  
Magical sprang and seized and lifted up,  
As the storm lifts a lily, and arrow-like  
Up towards the snow-bound heights in rising cloud  
Rushed with the goddess to the trembling East.  
But with more formidable speed and fast  
Storming through heaven King Pururavus  
Hurled after him. The giant turned and knew  
The sound of those victorious wheels and light  
In a man's face more dangerous to evil  
Than all the shining Gods. He stood, he raised  
One dreadful arm that stretched across the heavens,  
And shook his baffling lance on high. But vast,  
But magnified by speed came threatening on  
With echoing hooves and battle in its wheels  
The chariot of the King Pururavus  
Bearing a formidable charioteer,  
Pururavus. The fiend paused, he rolled his eyes  
Full of defiance, passion and despair  
Upon the swooning goddess in his arms  
And that avenger. Violence and fear  
Poised him a moment on a wave of fate  
This way to death cadent, that way to shame.  
Then groaning in his great tumultuous breast  
He dropped upon the snow heaven's ravished flower



And fled, a blackness in the East. New sky  
Replenished from the sullen cloud dawned out;  
The great pure azure rose in sunlight wide.  
Nor King Pururavus pursued but checked  
His rushing chariot on the quiet snow  
And sprang towards her and knelt down and trembled.  
Perfect she lay amid her tresses wide,  
Like a mishandled lily luminous,  
As she had fallen. From the lucid robe  
One shoulder gleamed and golden breast left bare,  
Divinely lifting, one gold arm was flung.  
A warm rich splendour exquisitely outlined  
Against the dazzling whiteness, and her face  
Was as a fallen moon among the snows.  
And King Pururavus, beholding, glowed  
Through all his limbs and maddened with a love  
He feared and cherished. Overawed and hushed,  
Hardly even breathing, long he knelt, a greatness  
Made stone with sudden dread and passion. Love  
With fiery attempt plucked him all down to her,  
But fear forbade his lips the perfect curls.  
At length he raised her still unkissed and laid  
In his bright chariot, next himself ascended  
And resting on one arm with fearful joy  
Her drooping head, with the other ruled the car;—  
With one arm ruled, but his eyes were for her  
Studying her fallen lids and to heart-beats  
Guessing the sweetness of the soul concealed.  
And soon she moved. Those wonderful wide orbs  
Dawned into his, quietly, as if in muse.  
A lovely slow surprise crept into them  
Afterwards; last, something far lovelier,  
Which was herself, and was delight, and love.  
As when a child falls asleep unawares  
At a closed window on a stormy day,

Looking into the weary rain, and long  
 Sleeps, and wakes quietly into a life  
 Of ancient moonlight, first the thoughtfulness  
 Of that felicitous world to which the soul  
 Is visitor in sleep, keeps her sublime  
 Discouraged eyes; human dismay comes next,  
 Slowly; last, sudden, they brighten and grow wide  
 With recognition of an altered world,  
 Delighted: so woke Urvashi to love.

But, hardly now that luminous inner dawn  
 Bridged joy between their eyes, laughter broke in  
 And the returning world; for Ménaca,  
 Standing a lily in the snows, laughed back  
 Those irresistible wheels and spoke like song;—  
 She tremulous and glad from bygone fear;  
 But all those flower-like came, increasing light,  
 Their bosoms quick and panting, bright, like waves  
 That under sunshine lift remembering storm.  
 And before all Ménaca tremulously  
 Smiling: "Whither, O King Pururavus,  
 Bear'st thou thy victory? Wilt thou set her  
 A golden triumph in thy halls? But she  
 Is other than thy marble caryatids  
 And austere doors, purity colourless.  
 Read not too much thy glory in her eyes.  
 Will not that hueless inner stream yet serve  
 Where thou wast wont to know thy perfect deeds?  
 But give her back, give us our sister back,  
 And in return take all thyself with thee."  
 So with flushed cheeks and smiling Ménaca.  
 And great Pururavus set down the nymph  
 In her bright sister's arms and stood awhile  
 Stormily calm in vast incertitude,  
 Quivering. Then divine Tilôttama:

"O King, O mortal mightier than the Gods!  
 For Gods change not their strength, but are of old  
 And as of old, and man, though less than these,  
 May yet proceed to greater, self-evolved.  
 Man, by experience of passion purged,  
 His myriad faculty perfecting, widens  
 His nature as it rises till it grows  
 With God conterminous. For one who tames  
 His hot tremulousness of soul unblest  
 And feels around him like an atmosphere  
 A quiet perfectness of joy and peace,  
 He, like the sunflower sole of all the year,  
 Images the divine to which he tends:  
 So thou, sole among men. And thou today  
 Hast a high deed perfected, saved from death  
 The great Gods of the solar world the first,  
 And saved with them the stars; but her today  
 Without whom all that world would grow to shade  
 Or grow to fire, but each way cease to live.  
 And thou shalt gather strange rewards, O King,  
 Hurting thyself with good, and lose thy life  
 To have the life of all the solar world,  
 Draw infinite gain out of more infinite loss,  
 And, for the lowest, endless fame. Today  
 Retire nor pluck the slowly-ripening fates;  
 Since who anticipates the patient Gods,  
 Finds his crown ashes and his empire grief.  
 So choose blind Titans in their violent souls  
 Unseeing, forfeiting the beautiful world  
 For momentary splendours." She was silent,  
 And he replied no word, but gathering  
 His reins swept from the golden group. His car  
 Through those mute Himalayan doors of earth  
 And all that silent life before our life

Solitary and great and merciless,  
Went groaning down the wind. He, the sole living,  
Over the dead deep-plunging precipices  
Passed bright and small in a wide dazzling world  
Illimitable, where eye flags and ear  
Listening feels inhuman loneliness.  
He tended towards Gungotri's solemn peaks  
And savage glaciers and the caverns pure  
Whence Ganges leaps, our mother, virgin-cold.  
But ere he plunged into the human vales  
And kindlier grandeurs, King Pururavus  
Looked back upon a gust of his great heart,  
And saw her. On a separate peak, divine,  
In blowing raiment and a glory of hair  
She stood and watched him go with serious eyes  
And a soft wonder in them and a light.  
One hand was in her streaming folds, one shaded  
Her eyes as if the vision that she saw  
Were brighter even than deathless eyes endure.  
Over her shoulder pressed a laughing crowd  
Of luminous faces. And Pururavus  
Staggered as smitten, and shaking wide his reins  
Rushed like a star into the infinite air;  
So curving downwards on precipitate wheels,  
His spirit all a storm, came with the wind  
Far-sounding into Ila's peaceful town.

## CANTO II

But from the dawn and mountains Urvasie  
Went marvelling and glad, not as of old  
A careless beam; for an august constraint,  
Unfelt before, ruled her extravagant grace  
And wayward beauty; and familiar things  
Grew strange to her, and to her eyes came mists  
Of mortal vision. Love was with her there,  
But not of Paradise nor that great guest  
Perpetual who makes his golden couch  
Between the Opsara's ever-heaving breasts.  
For this was rapturous, troubled, self-absorbed,  
A gracious human presence which she loved,  
And wondered at, and hid deep in her heart.  
And whether in the immortal's dance she moved,  
A billow, or her fingers like sunbeams  
Brightened the harps of heaven, or going out  
With the white dawn to bathe in Swerga's streams,  
Or in the woods of Eden wandering,  
Or happy sitting under peaceful boughs  
In a great golden evening, all she did,  
Celestial occupations, all she thought  
And all she was, though still the same, had changed.  
There was a happy trouble in her ways  
And movements; her felicitous lashes drooped  
With a burden; and all her daily acts  
Were as a statue imitating life,  
Not single-hearted like the sovran Gods.  
Now as the days of heaven went by in quiet  
And there was peaceful summer 'mid the Gods,  
In Swerga song increased and dances swayed

In multitudinous beauty, jasmine-crowned;  
 And often in high Indra's hall the spirits  
 Immortal met to watch the shows divine  
 Of action and celestial theatre.  
 For not of earth alone are delicate arts  
 And noble imitations, but in heaven  
 Have their rich prototypes. So on that day  
 Before a divine audience there was staged  
 The Choice of Luxmie. Urvasie enacted,  
 The goddess, Ocean's child, and Ménaca  
 Was Varunie, and other girls of heaven  
 Assembled the august desiring Gods.  
 Full strangely sweet those delicate mimics were;  
 Moonbeam faces imitated the strength  
 And silence of great spirits battle-worn,  
 And little hands the awful muniments  
 Of empire grasped and powers that shake the world.  
 Then with a golden wave of arm sublime  
 Ménaca towards the warlike consistory,  
 Under half-drooping lashes indicating  
 Where calm eternal Vishnu like a cloud  
 Sat discus-armed, said to her sister bright:  
 " Daughter of Ocean, sister, for whom heaven  
 Is passionate, thou hast reviewed the powers  
 Eternal and their dreadful beauty scanned,  
 And heard their blissful names. Say, unafraid  
 Before these listening faces, whom thou lovest  
 Above all Gods and more than earth and more  
 Than joy of Swerga's streams?" And Urvasie,  
 Musing with wide unseeing eyes, replied  
 In a far voice: " The King Pururavus."  
 Then, as a wind among the leaves, there swept  
 A gust of laughter through the assembled Gods,  
 A happy summer sound. But not in mirth

Bharuth, the mighty dramatist of heaven,  
 Passionate to see his smooth work marred and spell  
 Broken of scenic fancies finely-touched:  
 "Since thou hast brought the breath of mortal air  
 Into the pure solemnities of heaven,  
 And since thou givest up to other ends  
 Than the one need for which God made thee form,  
 Thy being and hast here transferred from earth  
 Human failure from the divided soul,  
 Marring my great creation, Urvasie,  
 I curse thee to possess thy heart's desire.  
 Exiled from Swerga's streams and golden groves  
 Thou, by terrestrial Ganges or on sad  
 Majestic mountains or in troubled towns,  
 Enjoy thy love, but hope not here to breathe  
 Felicity in regions built for peace  
 Of who, erect in their own nature, keep  
 Living by fated toils the glorious world."  
 He ceased and there was silence of the Gods.  
 Then Indra answered, smiling, though ill-pleased:  
 "Bharuth, not well nor by the fates allowed  
 To exile without limit from the skies  
 Who of the skies is part. Her wilt thou banish  
 From the felicity of grove and stream,  
 Making our Eden empty of her smiles?  
 But what felicity in stream or grove  
 And she not secret there? And hast thou taxed  
 Her passion, yet in passion would'st deface  
 The beautiful world because thy work is vain?"  
 Bharuth replied, the high poet severe:  
 "Irrevocable is the doom pronounced  
 Once by my lips. Fates too are born of song.  
 But if of limit thou speakest and the term  
 By nature fixed to the divorce of her

From the felicity in which she moves,  
 Nature that fixed the limit, still effects  
 Inevitably its fated ends. For Fate,  
 The dim great presence, is but nature made  
 Irrevocable in its fruits. Let her  
 To the pure banks of sacred Ganges wend.  
 There she may keep her exile, from of old  
 Intended for perfection of the earth  
 Through her sweet change. Heaven too shall flash and grow  
 Fairer with her returning feet though changed,—  
 Though changed, yet lovelier from beneficence.  
 For she will come soft with maternal cheeks  
 And flushed from nuptial arms and human-blest  
 With touches of the warm delightful earth.”  
 He said and Urvashie from the dumb place  
 And thoughtful presence of the Gods departed  
 Into the breezy noon of Swerga. Under  
 Green well-known boughs laden with nameless fruit  
 And over blissful swards and perfect flowers  
 And through the wandering alleys she arrived  
 To heavenly Ganges where it streams o’er stones;  
 There from the banks of summer downward stepped,  
 One little golden hand gathering her dress  
 Above her naked knees, and, lovely, passed  
 Through the divine pellucid river on  
 To Swerga’s portals, pausing on the slope  
 Which goes toward the world. There she looked down  
 With yearning eyes far into endless space.  
 Behind her stood the green felicitous peaks  
 And trembling tops of woods and pulse of blue  
 With those calm cloudless summits quivering.  
 All heaven was behind her, but she sent  
 No look to those eternal seats of joy.  
 She down the sunbeams gazed where mountains rose



In snow, the bleak and mighty hills of earth,  
 And virgin forests vast, great infant streams  
 And cities young in the heroic dawn  
 Of history and insurgent human art  
 Titanic on the old stupendous hills.  
 Towards these she gazed down under eyelids glad.  
 And to her gazing came Tilôttama,  
 Bright out of heaven, and clasped her quiet hand  
 And murmured softly, "Sister, let us go."  
 Then they went down into the waiting world,  
 The golden women, and through gorges mute  
 Past Budricayshwur in the silent snow  
 Came silent to Pururavus Urvasie.

For not in Ilian streets Pururavus  
 Sojourned, nor in the happy throng of men,  
 But with the infinite and the lonely hills.  
 For he grew weary of walls and luminous carved  
 Imperial pillars bearing up huge weight  
 Of architectural stone, and the long street,  
 And thoughtful temple wide, and sharp cymbals  
 Protecting the august pure place with sound;  
 The battled tramp of men, sessions of kings,  
 The lightning from sharp weapons, jubilant crash  
 Of chariots, and the Veda's mighty chant;  
 The bright booths of the merchants, the loud looms  
 And the smith's hammer clanging music out,  
 And stalwart men driving the patient plow  
 Indomitable in fierce breath of noon.  
 Of these he now grew weary and the blaze  
 Of kingship, its immense and iron toils,  
 With one hand shielding in the people's ease,  
 With one hand smiting back the tireless foe,  
 And difficulty of equal justice cold,

And kind beneficent works harmonious kept  
 With terrible control; the father's face,  
 The man's heart, the steeled intellect of power  
 Insolubly one; and after sleepless nights  
 Labouring greatly for a great reward,  
 Frequent failure and vigorous success,  
 And sweet reward of voices filial grown.  
 These that were once his life, he loved no more.  
 They held not his desire nor were alive,  
 But pale magnificent ghosts out of the past  
 With sad obsession closing him from warm  
 Life and the future in far sunlight gold.  
 For in his heart and in his musing eyes  
 There was a light on the cold snows, a blush  
 Upon the virgin quiet of the East  
 And storm and slowly-lifting lids. Therefore  
 He left the city Ilian and plains  
 Whence with a mighty motion eastward flows  
 Ganges, heroical and young, a swift  
 Mother of strenuous nations, nor yet reaches  
 Her musing age in ardent deep Bengal.  
 He journeyed to the cold north and the hills  
 Austere, past Budricayshwur ever north,  
 Till, in the sixth month of his pilgrimage  
 Uneasy, to a silent place he came  
 Within a heaped enormous region piled  
 With prone far-drifting hills, huge peaks o'erwhelmed  
 Under the vast illimitable snows,—  
 Snow on ravine, and snow on cliff, and snow  
 Sweeping in strenuous outlines to heaven,  
 With distant gleaming vales and turbulent rocks,  
 Giant precipices black-hewn and bold  
 Daring the universal whiteness; last,  
 A mystic gorge into some secret world.

He in that region waste and wonderful  
Sojourned, and morning-star and evening-star  
Shone over him and faded, and immense  
Darkness wrapped the hushed mountain solitudes  
And moonlight's brilliant muse and the cold stars  
And day upon the summits brightening.  
But ere day grew the hero nympholept  
Climbed the immortal summits towards the dawn  
And came with falling evening down and lay  
Watching the marvellous sky, but called not sleep  
That beat her gentle wings over his eyes,  
Nor food he needed who was grown a god.  
And in the seventh month of his waiting long  
Summit or cliff he climbed no more, but added  
To the surrounding hush sat motionless,  
Gazing towards the dim unfathomed gorge.  
Six days he sat and on the seventh they came  
Through the dumb gorge, a breath of heaven, a stir,  
Then Eden's girls stepping with moonbeam feet  
Over the barren rocks and dazzling snows,  
That grew less dazzling, their tresses half unbound  
And delicate raiment girdled enchantingly.  
Silent the perfect presences of heaven  
Came towards him and stood a little away,  
Like flowers waiting for a sunbeam. He  
Stirred not, but without voice, in vision merged,  
Sat, as one sleeping momentarily expects  
The end of a dear dream he sees, and knows  
It is a dream, and quietly resigned  
Waits for the fragile bliss to break or fade.  
Then nearer drew divine Tilôttama  
And stood before his silence statuesque,  
Holding her sister's hand; for she hung back,  
Not as an earthly maiden, cheeks suffused,

Lids drooping, but as men from patience called  
 Before supreme felicity hang back,  
 A little awed, a little doubtful, fearing  
 To enter radiant Paradise, so bright  
 It seems; thus she and quailed before her bliss.  
 But her sister, extending one bright arm:  
 "Pururavus, thou hast conquered and I bring  
 No dream into thy life, but Urvasie."  
 And at that name the strong Pururavus  
 Rose swaying to his feet like one struck blind;  
 Or when a great thought flashes through his brain,  
 A poet starts up and almost cries aloud  
 As at a voice,—so he arose and heard.  
 And slowly said divine Tilôttama:  
 "Yet, son of Ila, one is man and other  
 The Opsaras of heaven, daughters of the sea,  
 Unlimited in being, Ocean-like.  
 They not to one lord yield nor in one face  
 Limit the universe, but like sweet air,  
 Water unowned and beautiful common light  
 In unrestrained surrender remain pure.  
 In patient paths of Nature upon earth  
 And over all the toiling stars we fill  
 With sacred passion large high-venturing spirits  
 And visit them with bliss; so are they moved  
 To immense creative anguish, glad if through  
 Heart-breaking toil once in bare seasons dawn  
 Our golden breasts between their hands or rush  
 Our passionate presence on them like a wave.  
 In heaven bright-limbed with bodily embrace  
 We clasp the Gods, and clasp the souls of men,  
 And know with winds and flowers liberty.  
 But what hast thou with us or winds or flowers?  
 O thou who wast so white, wilt thou not keep

Thy pure and lonely eminence and move  
 For ever towards morning like a star?  
 Or as thy earthly Ganges rolling down  
 Between the homes and passionate deeds of men,  
 And bearing many boats and white with oars,  
 From all that life quite separate, only lives  
 Towards Ocean, so thou doest human work,  
 Making a mighty nation, doing high  
 And necessary deeds, but, all untouched  
 By action, livest in thy soul apart  
 And to the immortal zenith climbest pure."  
 But he, blind as from dazzling dreams, said low:  
 "One I thought spoke far-off of purity  
 And whiteness and the human soul in God.  
 These things were with me once, but now I see  
 The Spring a golden child and shaken fields.  
 All beautiful things draw near and come to me.  
 I dream upon a woman's glorious breasts,  
 And watch the dew-drop and am glad with birds,  
 And love the perfect coilings of the snake,  
 And cry with fire in the burning trees,  
 And am a wave towards desired shores.  
 I move to these and move towards her bosom  
 And mystic eyes where all these are one dream.  
 And what shall God profit me or his glory,  
 Who love one small face more than all his worlds?"  
 He woke with his own voice. His words that first  
 Dreamed like a languid wave, sudden were foam;  
 And he beheld her standing and his look  
 Grew strong; he yearned towards her like a wave,  
 And she received him in her eyes as earth  
 Receives the rain. Then bright Tilôttama  
 Cried in a shining glory over them:  
 "O happy lover and O fortunate loved,

Who make love heavenlier by loss! Ah yet,  
 The Gods give no irrecoverable gifts,  
 Nor unconditioned, O Pururavus,  
 Is highest bliss even to most favoured men.  
 And thy deep joy must tremble o'er her with soul  
 On guard, all overshadowed by a fear.  
 For one year thou shalt know her on the peaks,  
 In solitary vastnesses of hills  
 And regions snow-besieged; and for one year  
 In the green forests populous and free  
 Life in sunlight and by delightful streams  
 Thou shalt enjoy her; and for one year where  
 The busy tramp of men goes ceaseless by,  
 Subduing her to lovely human cares:  
 And so long after as one law observed  
 Save her to thee, O King; for never man  
 With Opsara may dwell and both be known:  
 Either a rapture she invisible  
 Or he a mystic body and mystic soul.  
 Reveal not then thy being naked to hers,  
 O virgin Ila's son, nor suffer ever  
 Light round thy body naked to her eyes,  
 Lest day dawn not on thy felicity,  
 Sole among men." She left them, shining up  
 Into the sunlight, and was lost in noon.  
 And King Pururavus stood for a space,  
 Like the entranced calm before great winds  
 And thunder. Then through all his limbs there flashed  
 Youth and the beauty and the warmth of earth  
 And joy of her left lonely to his will.  
 He moved, he came towards her. She, a leaf  
 Before a gust among the nearing trees,  
 Cowered. But, all a sea of mighty joy  
 Rushing and swallowing up the golden sand,  
 With a great cry and glad Pururavus

Seized her and caught her to his bosom thrilled,  
Clinging and shuddering. All her wonderful hair  
Loosened and the wind seized and bore it streaming  
Over the shoulder of Pururavus  
And on his cheek a softness. She, o'erborne,  
Panting, with inarticulate murmurs lay,  
Like a slim tree half seen through driving hail,  
Her naked arms clasping his neck, her cheek  
And golden throat averted, and wide trouble  
In her large eyes bewildered with their bliss.  
Amid her wind-blown hair their faces met.  
With her sweet limbs all his, feeling her breasts  
Tumultuous up against his beating heart,  
He kissed the glorious mouth of heaven's desire.  
So clung they as two shipwrecked in a surge.  
Then strong Pururavus, with godlike eyes  
Mastering hers, cried tremulous: "O beloved,  
O miser of thy rich and happy voice,  
One word, one word to tell me that thou lovest."  
And Urvasie, all broken on his bosom,  
Her godhead in his passion lost, moaned out  
From her imprisoned breasts, "My lord, my love!"

### CANTO III

So was a goddess won to mortal arms;  
And for twelve months he held her on the peaks,  
In solitary vastnesses of hills  
And regions snow-besieged. There in dim gorge  
And tenebrous ravine and on wide snows  
Clothed with deserted space, o'er precipices  
With the far eagles wheeling under them,  
Or where large glaciers watch, or under cliffs  
O'er-murmured by the streaming waterfalls,  
And later in the pleasant lower hills,  
He of her beauty world-desired took joy:  
And all earth's silent sublime spaces passed  
Into his blood and grew a part of thought.  
Twelve months in the green forests populous,  
Life in sunlight and by delightful streams  
He increased rapture. The green tremulous groves,  
And solitary rivers white with birds,  
And watered hollow's gleam, and sunny boughs  
Gorgeous with peacocks or illumining  
Bright bosom of doves, in forests, musing day  
Or the great night with roar of many beasts,—  
All these were Eden round the glorious pair.  
And in their third flower-haunted spring of love  
A child was born from golden Urvasie.  
But when the goddess from maternal pangs  
Woke to the child's sweet face and strange tumult  
Of new delight and felt the little hands  
Erring about her breasts, passionate she cried:  
"How long shall we in woods, Pururavus,  
Waste the glad days of cheerful human life?"



What pleasure is in soulless woods and waves?  
 But I would go into the homes of men,  
 Hear the great sound of cities, watch the eager  
 Faces tending to hall and mart, and talk  
 With the bright girls of earth, and kiss the eyes  
 Of little children, feel smooth floors of stone  
 Under my feet and the restraint of walls,  
 And eat earth's food from vessels made and drink  
 Earth's water cool from jars, and know all joy  
 And labour of that blithe and busy world."  
 She said, and he with a slight happy smile  
 Consented. So to sacred Ganges they  
 Came and the virgin's city Ilian.  
 But when they neared the mighty destined walls,  
 His virgin-mother from her temple pure  
 Saw him, and a wild blare of conchs arose.  
 Rejoicing to the lion-gates they streamed,  
 The people of Pururavus, a glad  
 Throng indistinguishable, traders and priests,  
 Merchants of many gains and craftsmen fine  
 Oblivious of their daily toils; the carver  
 Flinging his tool away and hammerless  
 The giant smith laughing through his vast beard.  
 And little children ran, all over flowers,  
 And girls like dawn with a delightful noise  
 Of anklets, matrons and old men divine,  
 And half a godhead with great glances came  
 The large-eyed poets of the Vedic chant;  
 Before them, all that multitude divided  
 Honouring them. In gleaming armour came,  
 And bearing dreadful bows, with sound of swords,  
 High lords of sacrifice and aged chiefs  
 War-weary and great heroes with mighty tread.  
 All these to a high noise of trumpets came.  
 They with a wide sound going up to heaven

Welcomed their king, and a soft shower of blooms  
 Fell on him as from warlike fields returned.  
 Much all they marvelled at his heavenly bride  
 And worshipped her, half-awed. And young girls came,  
 Daughters of warriors, to great houses wed,  
 Sweet faces of delightful laughter, came  
 And took into their glad embrace and kissed,  
 Enamoured of her smiling mouth, and praised  
 Aloud her beauty. With flowers then they bound  
 Her soft immortal wrists, and through the gates,  
 Labouring in vain to bend great bows, waving  
 Far-glancing steel, and up the bridal streets  
 Captive the girlish phalanx, bright with swords,  
 After the old heroic fashion led.  
 They amid trumpets and the vast acclaim  
 Of a glad people brought the child of Gods  
 To her terrestrial home; through the strong doors  
 They lifted, and upon an earthly floor,  
 Loosening, let from the gleaming limbs slide down  
 Her heavenly vesture; next they brought and flung  
 About her sweet insufferable grace  
 Mortal habiliments, a clinging robe.  
 Over her hair the wifely veil was drawn.  
 Thus was the love of all the world confined  
 To one man's home. And O too fortunate  
 Mortal, who could with those august joys  
 Mingle our little happy human pains,  
 Subduing a fair goddess from her skies  
 To gentle ordinary things, sweet service  
 And household tasks making her beautiful,  
 And trivial daily words, and kisses kind,  
 And all the meaning dear of wife and home!  
 Human with earth dwelt golden Urvsie,  
 And bore to King Pururavus a race  
 Of glorious children, each a shining god.

She loved that great and simple life of old,  
 Its marble outlines, strong joys and clear air  
 Around the soul, loved and made roseate.  
 The sacred city felt a finer life  
 Within it; burning inspirations breathed  
 From hallowed poets; and architects to grace  
 And fancy their immense conceptions toned;  
 Numberless heroes emulously drove forth  
 And in strong joyous battle rolling back  
 The dark barbarian borders, flashed through fields,  
 Brilliant, and sages in their souls saw God.  
 And from the city of Pururavus  
 High influences went; Indus and Ganges  
 And all the golden intermediate lands  
 Grew with them and a perfect impulse felt.  
 Seven years the earth rejoiced in Urvasie.

But in their fortunate heavens the high Gods  
 Dwelt infelicitous, losing the old  
 Rapture inexplicable and thrill beneath  
 Their ancient calm. Therefore not long enduring,  
 They in colossal council marble, said  
 To that bright sister whom she had loved best,  
 "Ménaca!" crying "how long shall one man  
 Divide from heaven its most perfect bliss?  
 Go down and bring her back, our bright one back,  
 And we shall love again our luminous halls."  
 She heard and went, with her ethereal robe  
 Murmuring about her, to the gates divine,  
 And looked into the world, and saw the far  
 Titanic Ilian city like a stone  
 Sunlit upon the small and distant earth.  
 Down from heaven's peaks the daughter of the sea  
 Went flashing and upon a breathless eve  
 Came to the city of Pururavus,

Air blazing far behind her till she paused.  
She over the palace of Pururavus  
Stood in shadow. Within the lights yet were;  
Still sat the princes and young poets sang  
On harps heroical of Urvasie  
And strong Pururavus, of Urvasie  
The light and lovely spirit golden-limbed,  
Son of a virgin strong Pururavus.  
"O earth made heaven to Pururavus!  
O heaven left earth without sweet Urvasie!  
"Rejoice possessing, O Pururavus!  
Be glad who art possessed, O Urvasie!  
"Behold the parents of the sacrifice!  
When they have met, then they together rush  
And in their arms the beautiful fire is born.  
"Behold the children of the earth and sky!  
When they met, then they loved, O then they clasped,  
And from their clasp a lovely presence grew.  
"A holy virgin's son we hear of thee  
Without a father born, Pururavus,  
Without a mother lovely Urvasie.  
"Hast thou not brought the sacrifice from heaven,  
The unquenched, unkindled fire, Pururavus?  
Hast thou not brought delightful Urvasie?  
"The fires of sacrifice mount ever up:  
To their lost heavens they naturally aspire.  
Their tops are weighted with a human prayer.  
"The soul of love mounts also towards the sky;  
Thence came the spark but hardly shall return;  
Its wings are weighted with too fierce a fire.  
"Rejoice in the warm earth, O lovely pair,  
The green strong earth that gave Pururavus.  
"Rejoice in the blithe earth, O lovely pair,  
The happy earth all flushed with Urvasie.  
"As lightning takes the heart with pleasant dread,

So love is of the strong Pururavus.  
"As breathes sweet fragrance from the flower oppressed,  
So love from thy bruised bosom, Urvasie."  
So sang they and the heart rejoiced. Then rose  
The princes and went down the long white street,  
Each to his home. Soon every sound had faded;  
Heaven and a few bright stars possessed the world.  
But in a silent place dim with the west  
On that last night of the sweet passionate earth,  
The goddess with the mortal hero lay.  
For over them victorious love still showered  
His arrows marble-dinting, not flower-tipped  
As our brief fading fires,—naked and large  
As heaven the monumental loves of old.  
On their rich bed they lay, and the two rams  
That once the subtle bright Gundhuras gave  
To Urvasie, were near; they were ever  
With her and cherished; hardly even she loved  
The tender faces of her children more  
Than these choice from flocks heavenly: only these  
Remained to her of unforgotten skies.  
So lay they under those fierce shafts of Love,  
And in the arms of strong Pururavus  
Once more were those beloved limbs embraced,  
Once more, if never once again on earth.  
Before he slept, the lord of Urvasie  
Clasped her to him and wooed from her tired lips  
One kiss, nor in its passion felt farewell.  
But the night darkened over the vague town,  
And clouds came gradual up, and through the clouds  
In thunderless great flashes stealing came  
The subtle-souled Gundhuras from the peaks  
Of distant Paradise. Thunder rolled out,  
And through the walls, in a fierce rush of light,  
Entered the thieves of heaven and stole the rams,

And fled with the same lightning. Shuddering  
 The exile of the skies awoke and knew  
 Her loss, and with a lamentable cry  
 Turned to her lord. "Arise, Pururavus!"  
 She wept, "they take from me my snow-white joys."  
 And starting from his sleep Pururavus,  
 In that waking when memory is far  
 And nature of a man unquestioned rules,  
 Heard of oppression and a space forgot  
 Fate and his weak tenure of mighty bliss,  
 Restored to the great nature of a king.  
 Wrathful he leaped up and on one swift stride  
 Reached to his bow. Before 'twas grasped he shuddered,  
 His soul all smitten with a rushing fear.  
 Alarmed he turned towards her. Suddenly wide  
 The whole room stood in splendour manifest,  
 All lightning, and heroically vast,  
 In gesture kingly like a statue stayed,  
 Rose glorious, all a grace of naked limbs,  
 The hero beautiful, Pururavus,  
 In that fierce light. Intenser than by day  
 He for one brilliant moment clear beheld  
 All the familiar place, the fretted huge  
 Images on the columns, the high-reared  
 Walls massively erect and silent floor,  
 And on the floor the gracious fallen dress  
 That never should embrace her perfect form,  
 Lying a glimmer, and each noble curve  
 Of the strong couch, and delicately distinct  
 The golden body and the flower-like face:  
 Beside her with a lovely smile that other,  
 One small hand pressing back the shining curls  
 Blown with her speed over her. Then all faded.  
 Thunder crashed through the heavens jubilant.  
 For a long while he stood with beating heart

Half-conscious of its loss, and as if waiting  
 Another flash, into the dimness gazed  
 For those loved outlines that were far away.  
 Then with a quiet smile he went and placed  
 Where she had lain such a short while ago  
 Both hands, expecting her sweet breasts, but found  
 Her place all empty to him. Silently  
 He lay down whispering to his own heart:  
 "She has arisen and her shining dress  
 Put round her and gone into the cool alcove  
 To fetch sweet water for the heavenly rams,  
 And she will stay awhile perhaps to look  
 And muse upon the night, and then come back,  
 And give them drink, and silently lie down  
 Beside me. I shall see her when it dawns."  
 And so he slept. But the grey dawn came in  
 And raised his lashes. He stretched out his arms  
 To find her. Then he knew he was alone.

Even so he would not dwell with his despair.  
 "She is but gone," he said, "for a little gone  
 Into the infinite silences afar  
 To see her golden sisters and revisit  
 The streams she knew and those unearthly skies.  
 But she will soon come back,—even if her heart  
 Would let her linger, mine would draw her back;—  
 Come soon and talk to me of all she left,  
 And clasp her children, and resume sweet goings  
 And happy daily tasks and rooms she loved."  
 So, steadfast, he continued kingly toils  
 Among a people greatly-destined, giving  
 In sacred sessions and assemblies calm  
 Counsels far-seeing, magnanimous decrees  
 Bronze against Time, and from the judgment seat  
 Unblamed sentence or reconciliation large.

And perfect trinity of holy fires  
 He kindled for desirable rain, and went  
 To concourse of strong men or pleasant crowds,  
 Or triumphed in great games armipotent.  
 Yet behind all his moments there was void.  
 And as when one puts from him desperately  
 The thought of an inevitable fate,  
 Blinding himself with present pleasures, often  
 At a slight sound, a knocking at the door,  
 A chance word terrible, or even uncalled  
 His heart grows sick with sudden fear, and ghastly  
 The face of that dread future through the window  
 Looks at him; mute he sits then shuddering:  
 So to Pururavus in session holy,  
 Or warlike concourse, or alone, speaking,  
 Or sitting, often a swift dreadful fear  
 Made his life naked like a lightning flash;  
 Then his whole being shook and his strong frame,  
 As with a fever, and his eyes gazed blind;  
 Soon with great breaths he repossessed his soul.  
 Long he endured thus, but when shocks of fear  
 And brilliant passage of remorseless suns  
 And wakeful nights wrestling with memory  
 Invisibly had worn his heart, he then  
 Going as one desperate, void of thought or aim,  
 Into that silent place dim with the west,  
 Saw there her dress empty of her, and bed  
 Forlorn, and the cold floor where she had lain  
 At noon and made life sweet to him with her voice.  
 Sometimes as in an upland reservoir  
 Built by the hands of early Aryan kings,  
 Its banks in secret fretted long go down,  
 Suddenly down with resonant collapse,  
 Then with a formidable sound the flood  
 Descends, heard over all the echoing hills,



And marble cities are o'erwhelmed; so sank  
 The courage of the strong Pururavus,  
 By memory and anguish overcome  
 And thoughts of bliss intolerable. Tears  
 Came from him; the unvanquished hero lay  
 With outstretched arms and wept. Henceforth his life  
 Was with that room. If he appeared in high  
 Session, warlike concourse or pleasant crowd,  
 Men looked on him as on the silent dead.  
 Nor did he linger, but from little stay  
 Would silently return and in hushed rooms  
 Watch with the little relics left of her,  
 Things he had hardly borne to see before,  
 Now clasped them often, often kissed, sometimes  
 Spoke to them as to sweet and living friends,  
 And often over his sleeping children hung.  
 Nor did he count the days, nor weep again,  
 But looked into the dawn with tearless eyes.  
 And all the people mourned for their great king,  
 Silently watching him, and many murmured:  
 "This is not he, the King Pururavus,  
 Hero august, who his impetuous soul  
 Ruled like a calm and skilful charioteer,  
 And was the virgin Ila's son, our king.  
 Would that the enemy's war-cry now might rush  
 Against our gates and all the air be sound.  
 Surely he would arise and lift his bow,  
 And his swift chariot hurling through the gates  
 Advance upon them like a sea, and triumph,  
 And be himself among the rushing wheels."  
 So they would murmur grieving. But the king  
 When the bright months brought round a lustier earth,  
 Felt over his numbed soul some touch of flowers,  
 And rose a little from his grief, and lifted  
 His eyes against the stars. Then he said low:

"I was not wont so quickly to despair.  
 O hast thou left me and art lost in light,  
 Cruel, between the shining hemispheres?  
 Yet even there I will pursue my joy.  
 Though all the great immortals jealously  
 Encompass round with shields thy golden limbs,  
 I may clash through them yet, or my strong patience  
 Will pluck my love down from her distant stars.  
 Still am I Ila's son, Pururavus,  
 That passionless pure strength though lost, though fallen  
 From the armed splendid soul which once I was."  
 So saying he to the hall of session strode,  
 Mightily like a king, a marble place  
 With wide Titanic arches imminent,  
 And from the brooding pillars seized a shell  
 And blew upon it. Like a storm the sound  
 Through Pratisthana's streets was blown. Forth came  
 From lintel proud and happy threshold low  
 The people pouring out. Majestic chiefs  
 And strong war-leaders and old famous men  
 And mighty poets first; behind them streamed  
 The Ilian people like driving rain, and filled  
 With faces the immeasurable hall.  
 And over them the beautiful great king  
 Rose bright; anticipations wonderful  
 Of immortality flashed through his eyes  
 And round his brow's august circumference.  
 "My people whom I made, I go from you;  
 And what shall I say to you, Ilian people,  
 Who know my glory and know my grief? Now I  
 Endure no more the desolate wide rooms  
 And gardens empty of her. I will depart  
 And find her under imperishable trees  
 Or secret beside streams. But since I go  
 And leave my work behind and a young nation  
 With destiny like an uncertain dawn

Over it—Ayûs her son, I give you. He  
 By beauty and strength incomparable shall rule.  
 Lo, I have planted earth with deeds and made  
 The widest heavens my monument, have brought  
 From Paradise the sempiternal fire  
 And warred in heaven among the warring Gods.  
 O People, you have shared my famous actions  
 Done in a few great years of earthly life,  
 The battles I fought, edifications vast,  
 And perfect institutes that I have framed.  
 High things we have done together, O my people.  
 But now I go to claim back from the Gods  
 Her they have taken from me, my dear reward.”  
 He spoke and all the nation listened, dumb.  
 Then was brought forth the bud of Urvasie,  
 With Vedic verse intoned and Ganges pure  
 Was crowned a king, and empire on his curls  
 Established. But Pururavus went forth,  
 Through ranks of silent people and gleaming arms,  
 With the last cloud of sunset up the fields  
 And darkening meadows. And from Ila’s rock,  
 And from the temple of Ila virginal,  
 A rushing splendour wonderfully arose  
 And shone all round the great departing king.  
 He in that light turned and saw under him  
 The mighty city, luminous and vast,  
 Colossally up-piled towards the heavens,  
 Temple and street and palace, and the sea  
 Of sorrowing faces and sad grieving eyes;  
 A moment saw, and disappeared from light  
 Into forest. Then a loud wail arose  
 From Pratisthana, as if barbarous hordes  
 Were in the streets and all its temples huge  
 Rising towards heaven in disastrous fire,  
 But he unlistening into darkness went.

## CANTO IV

Through darkness and immense dim night he went  
Mid phantom outlines of approaching trees,  
And all the day in green leaves, till he came  
To peopled forests and sweet clamorous streams  
And marvellous shining meadows where he lived  
With Urvasie his love in seasons old.  
These like domestic faces waiting were.  
He knew each wind-blown tree, each different field;  
And could distinguish all the sounding rivers  
Each by its own voice and peculiar flow.  
Here were the happy shades where they had lain  
Inarmed and murmuring, here half-lustrous groves  
Still voiceful with a sacred sound at noon,  
And these the rivers from her beauty bright.  
There straying in field and forest he to each  
Familiar spot so full of her would speak,  
Pausing by banks and memorable trees.  
“O sacred fig-tree, under thee she paused  
Musing amid her tresses, and her eyes  
Were sweet and grave. And, O delicious shade,  
Thou hast experienced brightness from her feet,  
O cool and dark green shelterer, perfect place!  
And lo! the boughs all ruinous towards earth  
With blossoms. Here she lay, her arms thrown back,  
Smiling up to me, and the flowers rained  
Upon her lips and eyes and bosom bare.  
And here a secret opening where she stood  
Waiting in narrow twilight; round her all  
Was green and secret with a mystic, dewy  
Half invitation into emerald worlds.

O river, from thee she moved towards the glade  
 Breathing and wet and fresh as if a flower  
 All bare from rain. And thou, great holy glade,  
 Sawest her face maternal o'er her child."  
 Then ceasing he would wait and listen, half  
 Expecting her. But all was silent; only  
 Perhaps a bird darted bright-winged away,  
 Or a grey snake slipped through the brilliant leaves.  
 Thus wandering, thus in every mindful place  
 Renewing old forgotten scenes that rose,  
 Gleam after gleam, upon his mind, as stars  
 Return at night; thus drawing from his heart  
 Where they lay covered, old sweet incidents  
 To live before his eyes; thus calling back  
 Uncertain moods, brief moments of her face,  
 And transient postures strangely beautiful,  
 Pleasures, and little happy mists of tears  
 Heart-freeing, he, materializing dreams,  
 Upon her very body almost seized.  
 Always a sense of imperfection slipped  
 Between him and that passionate success.  
 Therefore he murmured at last unsatisfied:  
 "She is not here; though every mystic glade  
 And sunbright pasture breathe alone of her  
 And quiver as with her presence, I find not  
 Her very limbs, her very face; yet dreamed  
 That here infallibly I should restrain  
 Her fugitive feet or hold her by the robe.  
 O once she was the luminous soul of these,  
 And in her body lived the summer and spring  
 And seed and blossoming, ripening and fall,  
 Hiding of Beauty in the wood and glen,  
 And flashing out into the sunlit fields  
 All flowers and laughter. All the happy moods  
 And all the beautiful amorous ways of earth

She was; but they now seem only her dress  
Left by her. Therefore, O ye seaward rivers,  
O forests, since ye have deceived my hope,  
I go from you to dazzling cruel ravines  
And find her on inclement mountains pure."

Then northward blown upon a storm of hope  
The hero self-discrowned, Pururavus,  
Went swiftly up the burning plains and through  
The portals of the old Saivaalic hills  
To the inferior heights, nor lingered long,  
Though pulsing with fierce memories, though thrilled  
With shocks of a great passion touching earth;  
But plunged o'er difficult gorge and prone ravine  
And rivers thundering between dim walls,  
Driven by immense desire, until he came  
To dreadful silence of the peaks and trod  
Regions as vast and lonely as his love.  
Then with a confident sublime appeal  
He to the listening summits stretched his hands:  
"O desolate strong Himalaya, great  
Thy peaks alone with heaven and dreadful hush  
In which the Soul of all the world is felt  
Meditating creation! Thou, O mountain,  
My bridal chamber wast. On thee we lay  
With summits towards the moon or with near stars  
Watching us in some wild inhuman vale,  
Thy silence over us like a coverlid  
Or a far avalanche for bridal song.  
Lo, she is fled into your silences!  
I come to you, O mountains, with a heart  
Desolate like you, like you snow-swept, and stretch  
Towards your solemn summits kindred hands.  
Give back to me, O mountains, give her back."  
He ceased and Himalaya bent towards him, white.

The mountains seemed to recognize a soul  
Immense as they, reaching as they to heaven  
And capable of infinite solitude.  
Long he, in meditation deep immersed,  
Strove to dissolve his soul among the hills  
Into the thought of Urvasie. The snow  
Stole down from heaven and touched his cheek and hair,  
The storm-blast from the peaks leaped down and smote  
But woke him not, and the white drops in vain  
Froze in his locks or crusted all his garb.  
For he lived only with his passionate heart.  
But as the months with slow unnoticed tread  
Passed o'er the hills nor brought sweet change of spring  
Nor autumn wet with dew, a voice at last  
Moved from far heavens, other than our sky.  
And he arose as one impelled and came  
Past the supreme great ridges northward, came  
Into the wonderful land far up the world  
Dim-looming, where the Northern Kurus dwell,  
The ancients of the world, invisible,  
Among forgotten mists. Through mists he moved  
Feeling a sense of unseen cities, hearing  
No sound, nor seeing face, but conscious ever  
Of an immense traditionary life  
Throbbing round him and dreams historical.  
For as he went, old kingly memories surged,  
And with vast forward faces driving came  
Origins and stabilities and empires,  
Huge passionate creations, impulses  
National realizing themselves in stone.  
Lastly with rolling of the mists afar  
He saw beneath him the primeval rocks  
Plunge down into the valley, and upsoar  
To light wide thoughtful domes and measureless

Ramparts, and mid them in a glory walk  
 The ancients of the world with eyes august.  
 Next towards the sun he looked and saw enthroned  
 Upon the summit one whose regal hair  
 Crowned her, and purple in waves down to her feet  
 Flowed, Indira, the goddess, Ocean's child,  
 Giver of empire who all beauty keeps  
 Between her hands, all glory, all wealth, all power.  
 Severe and beautiful she leaned her face.  
 "What passion, Ilian Pururavus,  
 Has led thee here to my great capital  
 And ancient men in the forgotten mists,  
 The fathers of the Aryan race? Of glory  
 Enamoured hast thou come, or for thy people  
 Empire soliciting? But other beauty  
 Is on thy brow and light no longer mine.  
 Yet not for self wast thou of virgin born,  
 Perfect, and the aerial paths of gods  
 Permitted to thy steps; nor for themselves,  
 But to the voice of Vedic litanies,  
 Sacredly placed are the dread crowns of Kings  
 For bright felicities and cruel toils.  
 And thou, O Ilian Pururavus,  
 For passion dost thou leave thy strenuous grandeurs,  
 A nation's destinies, and hast not feared  
 The sad inferior Ganges lapsing down  
 With mournful rumour through the shades of Hell?"  
 Then with calm eyes the hero Ilian:  
 "O Goddess, patroness of Aryasthan,  
 Lover of banyan and of lotus, I  
 Not from the fear of Hell or hope of Heaven  
 Do good or ill. Reigning I reigned o'er self,  
 And with a kingly soul did kingly deeds.  
 Now driven by a termless wide desire  
 I wander over snow and countries vague."



And like a viol Luxmie answered him:  
"Sprung of the moon, thy grandsire's fault in thee  
Yet lives; but since thy love is singly great,  
Doubtless thou shalt possess thy whole desire.  
Yet hast thou maimed the future and discrowned  
The Aryan people; for though Ila's sons,  
In Hustina, the city of elephants,  
And Indraprutha, future towns, shall rule  
Drawing my peoples to one sceptre, at last  
Their power by excess of beauty falls,—  
Thy sin, Pururavus—of beauty and love:  
And this the land divine to impure grasp  
Yields of barbarians from the outer shores."  
She ceased and the oblivious mists rolled down.  
But the strong hero uncrowned, Pururavus,  
Eastward, all dreaming with his great desire,  
Wandered as when a man in sleep arises,  
And goes into the night, and under stars  
Through the black spaces moves, nor knows his feet  
Nor where they guide him, but dread unseen power  
Walks by him and leads his unerring steps  
To some weird forest or gaunt mountain-side;  
There he awakes, a horror in his soul,  
And shudders alien amid places strange.  
So wandered, driven by an unknown power,  
Pururavus. Over hushed dreadful hills  
And snows more breathless to the quiet banks  
Of a wide lake mid rocks and bending woods  
He came, and saw calm mountains over it,  
And knew in his awed heart the hill of God,  
Coilas, and Mainaac with its summits gold.  
Awed he in heart, yet with a quicker stride  
He moved and eyes of silent joy, like one  
Who coming from long travel, sees the old

Village and children's faces at the doors.  
In a wild faery place where mountain streams  
Glimmer from the dim rocks and meet the lake  
Amid a wrestle of tangled trees and heaped  
Moss-grown disordered stones, and all the water  
Is hidden with its lotuses and sways  
Shimmering between leaves or strains through bloom,  
She sat, the mother of the Aryans, white  
With a sublime pallor beneath her hair.  
Musing, with wide creative brows, she sat  
In a slight lovely dress fastened with flowers,  
All heaped with her large tresses. Golden swans  
Preened in the waters by her dipping feet.  
One hand propped her fair marble cheek, the other  
The mystic lotus hardly held. Seeing her  
Pururavus bent to her and adored.  
And she looked up and musing towards him  
Said low: "O son, I knew thy steps afar.  
Of me thou wast; for as I suffered rapture,  
Invaded by the sea of images  
Breaking upon me from all winds, and saw  
Indus and Ganges with prophetic mind,  
A virginal impulse gleamed from my bosom  
And on the earth took beauty and form. I saw  
Thee from that glory issue and rejoiced.  
But now thou comest quite discrowned. From me,  
O son, thou hadst the impulse beautiful  
That made thy soul all colour. For I strive  
Towards the insufferable heights and flash  
With haloes of that sacred light intense.  
But lo! the spring and all its flowers, and lo!  
How bright the Soma juice. What golden joys,  
What living passions, what immortal tears!  
I lift the veil that hides the Immortal—Ah!

My lids faint. Ah! the veil was lovelier.  
My flowers wither in that height, my swan  
Spreads not his wings felicitous so far.  
O one day I shall turn from the great verse  
And marble aspiration to sing sweetly  
Of lovers and the poms of wealth and wine  
And warm delights and warm desires and earth.  
O mine own son, Pururavus, I fall  
By thy vast failure from my dazzling skies."  
And Ila's son made answer, "O white-armed,  
O mother of the Aryans, of my life  
Creatress! fates colossal overrule.  
But lo! I wander like a wave, nor find  
Limit to the desire that wastes my soul."  
Then with a sweet immortal smile the mother  
Gave to him in the hollow of her hand  
Wonderful water of the lake. He drank,  
And understood infinity, and saw  
Time like a snake coiling among the stars;  
And earth he saw, and mortal nights and days  
Grew to him moments, and his limbs became  
Undying and his thoughts as marble endured.  
Then to the hero deified the goddess,  
"O strong immortal, now pursue thy joy:  
Yet first rise up the peaks of Coilas; there  
The Mighty Mother sits, whose sovran voice  
Shall ratify to thee thy future fair,"  
Said and caressed his brow with lips divine.  
And bright Pururavus rose up the hill  
Towards the breathless summit. Thence, enshrined  
In deep concealing glories, came a voice,  
And clearer he discerned as one whose eyes,  
Long cognizant of darkness, coming forth,  
Grow gradually habituated to light,

The calm compassionate face, the heaven-wide brow,  
 And the robust great limbs that bear the world.  
 Prophetic and deep her voice came down:  
 "Thou then hast failed, bright soul; but God blames not  
 Nor punishes. Impartially he deals  
 To every strenuous spirit its chosen reward.  
 And since no work, however maimed, no smallest  
 Energy added to the mighty sum  
 Of action fails of its exact result,  
 Empire shall in thy line and forceful brain  
 Persist, the boundless impulse towards rule  
 Of grandiose souls perpetually recur,  
 And minds immense and personalities  
 With battle and with passion and with storm  
 Shall burn through Aryan history, the speech  
 Of ages. In thy line the Spirit Supreme  
 Shall bound existence with one human form;  
 In Mathura and ocean Dwarka Man  
 Earthly perfectibility of soul  
 Example: son of thy line and eulogist,  
 The vast clear poet of the golden verse,  
 Whose song shall be as wide as is the world.  
 But all by huge self-will or violence marred  
 Of passionate uncontrol; if pure, their work  
 By touch of later turbulent hands unsphered  
 Or fames by legend stained. Upon my heights  
 Breathing God's air, strong as the sky and pure,  
 Dwell only Ixvaacou's children; destined theirs  
 Heaven's perfect praise, earth's sole unequalled song.  
 But thou, O Ila's son, take up thy joy.  
 For thee in sweet Gundhurva world eternal  
 Rapture and clasp unloosed of Urvasie,  
 Till the long night when God asleep shall fall."

Ceased the great voice and strong Pururavus  
 Glad of his high reward, however dearly  
 Purchased, purchased with infinite downfall,  
 With footing now divine went up the world.  
 Mid regions sweet and peaks of milk-white snow  
 And lovely corners and delicious lakes,  
 He saw a road all sunlight and the gates  
 Of the Gundhuras' home. O never ship  
 From Ocean into Ocean erring knew  
 Such joy through all its patient sails at sight  
 Of final haven near as the tried heart  
 Of earth's successful son at that fair goal.  
 Towards the gates he hastened, and one bright  
 With angel face who at those portals stood  
 Cried down, "We wait for thee, Pururavus."  
 Then to his hearing musical, the hinges  
 Called; he beheld the subtle faces look  
 Down on him and the crowd of luminous forms,  
 And entered to immortal sound of lyres.  
 Up through the streets a silver cry went on  
 Before him of high instruments. From all  
 The winds the marvellous musicians pressed  
 To welcome that immortal lover. One  
 Whose pure limned brows aerial wore by right  
 Faery authority, stood from the crowd.  
 "O Ila's son, far-famed Pururavus,  
 Destined to joys by mortals all unhopèd!  
 Move to thy sacred glories as a star  
 Into its destined place, shine over us  
 Here greatest as upon thy greener earth."  
 They through the thrilling regions musical  
 Led him and marvelled at him and praised with song  
 His fair sublimity of form and brow  
 And warlike limbs and grace heroical.

He heeded not, for all his soul was straining  
With expectation of a near delight.  
His eyes that sought her ever, beheld a wall  
Of mighty trees and, where they arched to part,  
Those two of all their sisters brightest rise,  
One blithe as is a happy brook, the other  
With her grave smile; and each took a strong hand  
In her soft clasp, and led him to a place  
Distinct mid faery-leaved ethereal trees  
And magic banks and sweet low curves of hills,  
And over all the sunlight like a charm.  
There by a sounding river 'downward thrown  
From under low green-curtaining boughs was she.  
Mute she arose and with wide quiet eyes  
Came towards him. In their immortal looks  
Was a deep feeling too august for joy,  
The sense that all eternity must follow  
One perfect moment. Then that comrade bright  
With slow grave smile, "O after absence wide  
Who meet and shall not sunder any more.  
Till slumber of the Supreme, strong be your souls  
To bear unchanging rapture; strong you were  
By patience to compel unwilling Gods."  
And they were left alone in that clear world.  
Then all his soul towards her leaning, took  
Pururavus into his clasp and felt,  
Seriously glad, the golden bosom on his  
Of Urvsie, his love; so pressing back  
The longed-for sacred face, lingering he kissed.  
Then Love in his sweet heavens was satisfied.  
But far below through silent mighty space  
The green and strenuous earth abandoned rolled.

# **LOVE AND DEATH**







## Love and Death

In woodlands of the bright and early world,  
When love was to himself yet new and warm  
And stainless, played like morning with a flower  
Ruru with his young bride Priyumvada.  
Fresh-cheeked and dew-eyed white Priyumvada  
Opened her budded heart of crimson bloom  
To love, to Ruru; Ruru, a happy flood  
Of passion round a lotus dancing thrilled,  
Blinded with his soul's waves Priyumvada.  
To him the earth was a bed for this sole flower,  
To her all the world was filled with his embrace.  
Wet with new rains the morning earth, released  
From her fierce centuries and burning suns,  
Lavished her breath in greenness; poignant flowers  
Thronged all her eager breast, and her young arms  
Cradled a childlike bounding life that played  
And would not cease, nor ever weary grew  
Of her bright promise; for all was joy and breeze  
And perfume, colour and bloom and ardent rays  
Of living, and delight desired the world.  
Then Earth was quick and pregnant tamelessly,  
A free and unvalled race possessed her plains  
Whose hearts uncramped by bonds, whose unspoiled thoughts  
At once replied to light. Foisoned the fields;  
Lonely and rich the forests and the swaying  
Of those unnumbered tops affected men  
With thoughts to their vast music kin. Undammed  
The virgin rivers moved towards the sea,  
And mountains yet unseen and peoples vague  
Winged young imagination like an eagle

To strange beauty remote. And Ruru felt  
 The sweetness of the early earth as sap  
 All through him, and short life an æon made  
 By boundless possibility, and love,  
 Sweetest of all unfathomable love,  
 A glory untired. As a bright bird comes flying  
 From airy extravagance to his own home,  
 And breasts his mate, and feels her all his goal,  
 So from boon sunlight and the fresh chill wave  
 Which swirled and lapped between the slumbering fields,  
 From forest pools and wanderings mid leaves  
 Through emerald ever-new discoveries,  
 Mysterious hillsides ranged and buoyant-swift  
 Races with our wild brothers in the meads,  
 Came Ruru back to the white-bosomed girl,  
 Strong-winged to pleasure. She all fresh and new  
 Rose to him, and he plunged into her charm.  
 For neither to her honey and poignancy  
 Artlessly interchanged, nor any limit  
 To the sweet physical delight of her  
 He found. Her eyes like deep and infinite wells  
 Lured his attracted soul, and her touch thrilled  
 Not lightly, though so light; the joy prolonged  
 And sweetness of the lingering of her lips  
 Was every time a nectar of surprise  
 To her lover; her smooth-gleaming shoulder bared  
 In darkness of her hair showed jasmine-bright,  
 While her kissed bosom by rich tumults stirred  
 Was a moved sea that rocked beneath his heart,  
 Then when her lips had made him blind, soft siege  
 Of all her unseen body to his rule  
 Betrayed the ravishing realm of her white limbs,  
 An empire for the glory of a God.  
 He knew not whether he loved most her smile,

Her causeless tears or little angers swift,  
 Whether held wet 'against him from the bath  
 Among her kindred lotuses, her cheeks  
 Soft to his lips and dangerous happy breasts  
 That vanquished all his strength with their desire,  
 Meeting his absence with her sudden face,  
 Or when the leaf-hid bird at night complained  
 Near their wreathed arbour on the moonlit lake,  
 Sobbing delight out from her heart of bliss,  
 Or in his clasp of rapture laughing low  
 Of his close bosom bridal-glad and pleased  
 With passion and this fiery play of love,  
 Or breaking off like one who thinks of grief,  
 Wonderful melancholy in her eyes  
 Grown liquid and with wayward sorrow large.  
 Thus he in her found a warm world of sweets,  
 And lived of ecstasy secure, nor deemed  
 Any new hour could match that early bliss.  
 But Love has joys for spirits born divine  
 More bleeding-lovely than his thornless rose.  
 That day he had left, while yet the east was dark,  
 Rising, her bosom and into the river  
 Swam out, exulting in the sting and swift  
 Sharp-edged desire around his limbs, and sprang  
 Wet to the bank, and streamed into the wood.  
 As a young horse upon the pastures glad  
 Feels greensward and the wind along his mane  
 And arches as he goes his neck, so went  
 In an immense delight of youth the boy  
 And shook his locks, joy-crested. Boundlessly  
 He revelled in swift air of life, a creature  
 Of wide and vigorous morning. Far he strayed  
 Tempting for flower and fruit branches in heaven,  
 And plucked, and flung away, and brighter chose,

Seeking comparisons for her bloom; and followed  
 New streams, and touched new trees, and felt slow beauty  
 And leafy secret change; for the damp leaves,  
 Grey-green at first, grew pallid with the light  
 And warmed with consciousness of sunshine near;  
 Then the whole daylight wandered in, and made  
 Hard tracts of splendour, and enriched all hues.  
 But when a happy sheltered heat he felt  
 And heard contented voice of living things  
 Harmonious with the noon, he turned and swiftly  
 Went homeward yearning to Priyumvada,  
 And near his home emerging from green leaves  
 He laughed towards the sun: "O father Sun,"  
 He cried, "how good it is to live, to love!  
 Surely our joy shall never end, nor we  
 Grow old, but like bright rivers or pure winds  
 Sweetly continue, or revive with flowers,  
 Or live at least as long as senseless trees."  
 He dreamed, and said with a soft smile: "Lo, she!  
 And she will turn from me with angry tears  
 Her delicate face more beautiful than storm  
 Or rainy moonlight. I will follow her,  
 And soothe her heart with sovereign flatteries;  
 Or rather all tyranny exhaust and taste  
 The beauty of her anger like a fruit,  
 Vexing her soul with helplessness; then soften  
 Easily with quiet undenied demand  
 Of heart insisting upon heart; or else  
 Will reinvest her beauty bright with flowers,  
 Or with my hands her little feet persuade.  
 Then will her face be like a sudden dawn,  
 And flower compelled into reluctant smiles."  
 He had not ceased when he beheld her. She,  
 Tearing a jasmine bloom with waiting hands,

Stood drooping, petulant, but heard at once  
His footsteps and before she was aware,  
A sudden smile of exquisite delight  
Leaped to her mouth, and a great blush of joy  
Surprised her cheeks. She for a moment stood  
Beautiful with her love before she died;  
And he laughed towards her. With a pitiful cry  
She paled; moaning, her stricken limbs collapsed.  
But petrified, in awful dumb surprise,  
He gazed; then waking with a bound was by her,  
All panic expectation. As he came,  
He saw a brilliant flash of coils evade  
The sunlight, and with hateful gorgeous hood  
Darted into green safety, hissing, death.  
Voiceless he sank beside her and stretched out  
His arms and desperately touched her face,  
As if to attract her soul to live, and sought  
Beseeching with his hands her bosom. O, she  
Was warm, and cruel hope pierced him; but pale  
As jasmines fading on a girl's sweet breast  
Her cheek was, and forgot its perfect rose.  
Her eyes that clung to sunlight yet, with pain  
Were large and feebly round his neck her arms  
She lifted and, desiring his pale cheek  
Against her bosom, sobbed out piteously,  
"Ah, love!" and stopped heart-broken; then, "O Love!  
Alas the green dear home that I must leave  
So early! I was so glad of love and kisses,  
And thought that centuries would not exhaust  
The deep embrace. And I have had so little  
Of joy and the wild day and throbbing night,  
Laughter, and tenderness, and strife and tears.  
I have not numbered half the brilliant birds  
In one green forest, nor am familiar grown

With sunrise and the progress of the eves,  
Nor have with plaintive cries of birds made friends,  
Cuckoo and rainlark and love-speak-to-me.  
I have not learned the names of half the flowers  
Around me; so few trees know me by my name;  
Nor have I seen the stars so very often  
That I should die. I feel a dreadful hand  
Drawing me from the touch of thy warm limbs  
Into some cold vague mist, and all black night  
Descends towards me. I no more am thine,  
But go I know not where, and see pale shapes  
And gloomy countries and that terrible stream.  
O Love, O Love, they take me from thee far,  
And whether we shall find each other ever  
In the wide dreadful territory of death,  
I know not. Or thou wilt forget me quite,  
And life compel thee into other arms.  
Ah, come with me! I cannot bear to wander  
In that cold cruel country all alone,  
Helpless and terrified, or sob by streams  
Denied sweet sunlight and by thee unloved.”  
Slower her voice came now, and over her cheek  
Death paused; then, sobbing like a little child  
Too early from her bounding pleasures called,  
The lovely discontented spirit stole  
From her warm body white. Over her leaned  
Ruru, and waited for dead lips to move.  
Still in the greenwood lay Priyumvada,  
And Ruru rose not from her, but with eyes  
Emptied of glory hung above his dead,  
Only, without a word, without a tear.  
Then the crowned wives of the great forest came,  
They who had fed her from maternal breasts,  
And grieved over the lovely body cold,

And bore it from him; nor did he entreat  
 One last look nor one kiss, nor yet denied  
 What he had loved so well. They the dead girl  
 Into some distant greenness bore away.

But Ruru, while the stillness of the place  
 Remembered her, sat without voice. He heard  
 Through the great silence that was now his soul,  
 The forest sounds, a squirrel's leap through leaves,  
 The cheeping of a bird just overhead,  
 A peacock with his melancholy cry  
 Complaining far away, and tossings dim  
 And slight unnoticeable stir of trees.  
 But all these were to him like distant things  
 And he alone in his heart's void. And yet  
 No thought he had of her so lately lost.  
 Rather far pictures, trivial incidents  
 Of that old life before her delicate face  
 Had lived for him, dumbly distinct like thoughts  
 Of men that die, kept with long pomps his mind  
 Excluding the dead girl. So still he was,  
 The birds flashed by him with their swift small wings,  
 Fanning him. Then he moved, then rigorous  
 Memory through all his body shuddering  
 Awoke, and he looked up and knew the place,  
 And recognised greenness immutable,  
 And saw old trees and the same flowers still bloom.  
 He felt the bright indifference of earth  
 And all the lonely uselessness of pain.  
 Then lifting up the beauty of his brow  
 He spoke, with sorrow pale: "O grim cold death!  
 But I will not like ordinary men  
 Sate thee with cries, and falsely woo thee,  
 And make my grief thy theatre, who lie

Prostrate beneath thy thunderbolts and make  
 Night witness of their moans, shuddering and crying  
 When sudden memories pierce them like swords,  
 And often starting up as at a thought  
 Intolerable, pace a little, then  
 Sink down exhausted by brief agony.  
 O secrecy terrific, darkness vast,  
 At which we shudder! Somewhere, I know not where,  
 Somehow, I know not how, I shall confront  
 Thy gloom, tremendous spirit, and seize with hands  
 And prove what thou art and what man." He said,  
 And slowly to the forests wandered. There  
 Long months he travelled between grief and grief,  
 Reliving thoughts of her with every pace,  
 Measuring vast pain in his immortal mind.  
 And his heart cried in him as when a fire  
 Roars through wide forests and the branches cry  
 Burning towards heaven in torture glorious.  
 So burned, immense, his grief within him; he raised  
 His young pure face all solemnised with pain,  
 Voiceless. Then Fate was shaken, and the Gods  
 Grieved for him, of his silence grown afraid.  
 Therefore from peaks divine came flashing down  
 Immortal Agni and to the uswutth-tree  
 Cried in the Voice that slays the world: "O tree  
 That liftest thy enormous branches able  
 To shelter armies, more than armies now  
 Shelter, be famous, house a brilliant God.  
 For the grief grows in Ruru's breast up-piled,  
 As wrestles with its anguished barricades  
 In silence an impending flood, and Gods  
 Immortal grow afraid. For earth alarmed  
 Shudders to bear the curse lest her young life  
 Pale with eclipse and all-creating love  
 Be to mere pain condemned. Divert the wrath



Into thy boughs, Uswuttha—thou shalt be  
 My throne—glorious, though in eternal pain,  
 Yet worth much pain to harbour divine fire.”  
 So ended the young pure destroyer’s voice,  
 And the dumb god consented silently.  
 In the same noon came Ruru; his mind had paused,  
 Lured for a moment by soft wandering gleams  
 Into forgetfulness of pain; for thoughts  
 Gentle and near-eyed whispering memories  
 So sweetly came, his blind heart dreamed she lived.  
 Slow the uswuttha-tree bent down its leaves,  
 And smote his cheek, and touched his heavy hair.  
 And Ruru turned illumined. For a moment,  
 One blissful moment he had felt ’t was she.  
 So had she often stolen up and touched  
 His curls with her enamoured fingers small,  
 Lingering, while the wind smote him with her hair  
 And her quick breath came to him like spring. Then he,  
 Turning, as one surprised with heaven, saw  
 Ready to his swift passionate grasp her bosom  
 And body sweet expecting his embrace.  
 Oh, now saw her not, but the guilty tree  
 Shrinking; then grief back with a double crown  
 Arose and stained his face with agony.  
 Nor silence he endured, but the dumb force  
 Ascetic and inherited, by sires  
 Fierce-musing earned, from the boy’s bosom blazed.  
 “O uswuttha-tree, wantonly who hast mocked  
 My anguish with the wind, but thou no more  
 Have joy of the cool wind nor green delight,  
 But live thy guilty leaves in fire, so long  
 As Aryan wheels by thy doomed shadow vast  
 Thunder to war, nor bless with cool wide waves  
 Lyric Saruswathi nations impure.”

He spoke, and the vast tree groaned through its leaves,  
 Recognising its fate; then smouldered; lines  
 Of living fire rushed up the girth and hissed  
 Serpentine in the unconsuming leaves;  
 Last, all Hutashan in his chariot armed  
 Sprang on the boughs and blazed into the sky,  
 And wailing all the great tormented creature  
 Stood wide in agony; one half was green  
 And earthly, the other a weird brilliance  
 Filled with the speed and cry of endless flame.  
 But he with the fierce rushing-out of power  
 Shaken and that strong grasp of anguish flung  
 His hands out to the sun; "Priyumvada!"  
 He cried, and at that well-loved sound there dawned  
 With overwhelming sweetness miserable  
 Upon his mind the old delightful times  
 When he had called her by her liquid name,  
 Where the voice loved to linger. He remembered  
 The chompuc bushes where she turned away  
 Half-angered, and his speaking of her name  
 Masterfully as to a lovely slave  
 Rebellious who has erred; at that the slow  
 Yielding of her small head, and after a little  
 Her sliding towards him and beautiful  
 Propitiating body as she sank down  
 With timid graspings deprecatingly  
 In prostrate warm surrender, her flushed cheeks  
 Upon his feet and little touches soft;  
 Or her long name uttered beseechingly,  
 And the swift leap of all her body to him,  
 And eyes of large repentance, and the weight  
 Of her wild bosom and lips unsatisfied;  
 Or hourly call for little trivial needs,  
 Or sweet unneeded wanton summoning,

Daily appeal that never staled nor lost  
 Its sudden music, and her lovely speed,  
 Sedulous occupation left, quick-breathing,  
 With great glad eyes and eager parted lips;  
 Or in deep quiet moments murmuring  
 That name like a religion in her ear,  
 And her calm look compelled to ecstasy;  
 Or to the river luring her, or breathed  
 Over her dainty slumber, or secret sweet  
 Bridal outpantings of her broken name.  
 All these as rush unintermitting waves  
 Upon a swimmer overborne, broke on him  
 Relentless, things too happy to be endured,  
 Till faint with the recalled felicity  
 Low he moaned out: "O pale Priyuvada!  
 O dead fair flower! yet living to my grief!  
 But I could only slay the innocent tree,  
 Powerless when power should have been. Not such  
 Was Bhrigu from whose sacred strength I spring,  
 Nor Bhrigu's son, my father, when he blazed  
 Out from Puloma's side, and burning, blind,  
 Fell like a tree the ravisher unjust.  
 But I degenerate from such sires. O Death  
 That showest not thy face beneath the stars,  
 But comest masked, and on our dear ones seizing  
 Fearest to wrestle equally with love!  
 Nor from thy gloomy house any come back  
 To tell thy way. But O, if any strength  
 In lover's constancy to torture dwell  
 Earthward to force a helping god and such  
 Ascetic force be born of lover's pain,  
 Let my dumb pangs be heard. Whoe'er thou art,  
 O thou bright enemy of Death, descend  
 And lead me to that portal dim. For I

Have burned in fires cruel as the fire  
 And lain upon a sharper couch than swords."  
 He ceased, and heaven thrilled, and the far blue  
 Quivered as with invisible downward wings.

But Ruru passioned on, and came with eve  
 To secret grass and a green opening moist  
 In a cool lustre. Leaned upon a tree  
 That bathed in faery air and saw the sky  
 Through branches, and a single parrot loud  
 Screamed from its top, there stood a golden boy,  
 Half-naked, with bright limbs all beautiful—  
 Delicate they were, in sweetness absolute:  
 For every gleam and every soft strong curve  
 Magically compelled the eye, and smote  
 The heart to weakness. In his hands he swung  
 A bow—not such as human archers use:  
 For the string moved and murmured like many bees,  
 And nameless fragrance made the casual air  
 A peril. He on Ruru that fair face  
 Turned, and his steps with lovely gesture chained.  
 "Who art thou here, in forests wandering,  
 And thy young exquisite face is solemnised  
 With pain? Luxuriously the Gods have tortured  
 Thy heart to see such dreadful glorious beauty  
 Agonize in thy lips and brilliant eyes:  
 As tyrants in the fierceness of others' pangs  
 Joy and feel strong, clothing with brilliant fire,  
 Tyrants in Titan lands. Needs must her mouth  
 Have been pure honey and her bosom a charm,  
 Whom thou desirest seeing not the green  
 And common lovely sounds hast quite forgot."  
 And Ruru, mastered by the God, replied:  
 "I know thee by thy cruel beauty bright,  
 Kama, who makest many worlds one fire.

Ah, wherefore wilt thou ask of her to increase  
 The passion and regret? Thou knowest, great love!  
 Thy nymph her mother, if thou truly art he  
 And not a dream of my disastrous soul."  
 But with the thrilled eternal smile that makes  
 The spring, the lover of Rathi golden-limbed  
 Replied to Ruru, "Mortal, I am he;  
 I am that Madan who inform the stars  
 With lustre and on life's wide canvas fill  
 Pictures of light and shade, of joy and tears,  
 Make ordinary moments wonderful  
 And common speech a charm: knit life to life  
 With interfusions of opposing souls  
 And sudden meetings and slow sorceries:  
 Wing the boy bridegroom to that panting breast,  
 Smite Gods with mortal faces, dreadfully  
 Among great beautiful kings and watched by eyes  
 That burn, force on the virgin's fainting limbs  
 And drive her to the one face never seen,  
 The one breast meant eternally for her.  
 By me come wedded sweets, by me the wife's  
 Busy delight and passionate obedience,  
 And loving eager service never sated,  
 And happy lips, and worshipping soft eyes:  
 And mine the husband's hungry arms and use  
 Unwearying of old tender words and ways,  
 Joy of her hair, and silent pleasure felt  
 Of nearness to one dear familiar shape.  
 Nor only these, but many affections bright  
 And soft glad things cluster around my name.  
 I plant fraternal tender yearnings, make  
 The sister's sweet attractiveness and leap  
 Of heart towards imperious kindred blood,  
 And the young mother's passionate deep look,  
 Earth's high similitude of One not earth,

Teach filial heart-beats strong. These are my gifts  
 For which men praise me, these my glories calm:  
 But fiercer shafts I can, wild storms blown down  
 Shaking fixed minds and melting marble natures,  
 Tears and dumb bitterness and pain unpitied,  
 Racked thirsting jealousy and kind hearts made stone:  
 And in undisciplined huge souls I sow  
 Dire vengeance and impossible cruelties,  
 Cold lusts that linger and fierce fickleness,  
 The loves close kin to hate, brute violence  
 And mad insatiable longings pale,  
 And passion blind as death and deaf as swords.  
 O mortal, all deep-souled desires and all  
 Yearnings immense are mine, so much I can."  
 So as he spoke, his face grew wonderful  
 With vast suggestion, his human-seeming limbs  
 Brightened with a soft splendour: luminous hints  
 Of the concealed divinity transpired.  
 But soon with a slight discontented frown:  
 "So much I can, as even the great Gods learn.  
 Only with death I wrestle in vain, until  
 My passionate godhead all becomes a doubt.  
 Mortal, I am the light in stars, of flowers  
 The bloom, the nameless fragrance that pervades  
 Creation: but behind me, older than me,  
 He comes with night and cold tremendous shade.  
 Hard is the way to him, most hard to find,  
 Harder to tread, for perishable feet  
 Almost impossible. Yet, O fair youth,  
 If thou must needs go down, and thou art strong  
 In passion and in constancy, nor easy  
 The soul to slay that has survived such grief—  
 Steel then thyself to venture, armed by Love.  
 Yet listen first what heavy trade they drive  
 Who would win back their dead to human arms."

So much the God; but swift, with eager eyes  
 And panting bosom and glorious flushed face,  
 The lover: "O great Love! O beautiful Love!  
 But if by strength is possible, of body  
 Or mind, battle of spirit or moving speech,  
 Sweet speech that makes even cruelty grow kind,  
 Or yearning melody—for I have heard  
 That when Saruswathi in heaven her harp  
 Has smitten, the cruel sweetness terrible  
 Coils taking no denial through the soul,  
 And tears burst from the hearts of Gods—then I,  
 Making great music, or with perfect words,  
 Will strive, or staying him with desperate hands  
 Match human strength 'gainst formidable Death.  
 But if with price, ah God! what easier! Tears  
 Dreadful, innumerable I will absolve,  
 Or pay with anguish through the centuries,  
 Soul's agony and torture physical,  
 So her small hands about my face at last  
 I feel, close real hair sting me with life,  
 And palpable breathing bosom on me press."  
 Then with a lenient smile the mighty God:  
 "O ignorant fond lover, not with tears  
 Shalt thou persuade immitigable Death.  
 He will not pity all thy pangs: nor know  
 His stony eyes with music to grow kind,  
 Nor lovely words accepts. And how wilt thou  
 Wrestle with that grim shadow, who canst not save  
 One bloom from fading? A sole thing the Gods  
 Demand from all men living, sacrifice:  
 Nor without this shall any crown be grasped.  
 Yet many sacrifices are there, oxen,  
 And prayers, and Soma wine, and pious flowers,  
 Blood and the fierce expense of mind, and pure  
 Incense of perfect actions, perfect thoughts,

Or liberality wide as the sun's,  
 Or ruthless labour or disastrous tears,  
 Exile or death or pain more hard than death,  
 Absence, a desert, from the faces loved;  
 Even sin may be a sumptuous sacrifice  
 Acceptable for unholy fruits. But none  
 Of these the inexorable shadow asks:  
 Alone of gods Death loves not gifts: he visits  
 The pure heart as the stained. Lo, the just man  
 Bowed helpless over his dead, nor all his virtues  
 Shall quicken that cold bosom: near him the wild  
 Marred face and passionate and will not leave  
 Kissing dead lips that shall not chide him more.  
 Life the pale ghost requires: with half thy life  
 Thou mayst protract the thread too early cut  
 Of that delightful spirit—half sweet life.  
 O Ruru, lo, thy frail precarious days,  
 And yet how sweet they are! simply to breathe  
 How warm and sweet! And ordinary things  
 How exquisite, thou then shalt learn when lost,  
 How luminous the daylight was, mere sleep  
 How soft and friendly clasping tired limbs,  
 And the deliciousness of common food.  
 And things indifferent thou then shalt want,  
 Regret rejected beauty, brightnesses  
 Bestowed in vain. Wilt thou yield up, O lover,  
 Half thy sweet portion of this light and gladness,  
 Thy little insufficient share, and vainly  
 Give to another? She is not thyself:  
 Thou dost not feel the gladness in her bosom,  
 Nor with the torture of thy body will she  
 Throb and cry out: at most with tender looks  
 And pitiful attempt to feel move near thee,  
 And weep how far she is from what she loves.  
 Men live like stars that see each other in heaven,



But one knows not the pleasure and the grief  
 The others feel: he lonely rapture has,  
 Or bears his incommunicable pain.  
 O Ruru, there are many beautiful faces,  
 But one thyself. Think then how thou shalt mourn  
 When thou hast shortened joy and feelst at last  
 The shadow that thou hadst for such sweet store."  
 He ceased with a strange doubtful look. But swift  
 Came back the lover's voice, like passionate rain.  
 "O idle words! For what is mere sunlight?  
 Who would live on into extreme old age,  
 Burden the impatient world, a weary old man,  
 And look back on a selfish time ill-spent  
 Exacting out of prodigal great life  
 Small separate pleasures like an usurer,  
 And no rich sacrifice and no large act  
 Finding onself in others, nor the sweet  
 Expense of nature in her passionate gusts  
 Of love and giving, first of the soul's needs?  
 Who is so coldly wise, and does not feel  
 How wasted were our grandiose human days  
 In prudent personal unshared delights?  
 Why dost thou mock me, friend of all the stars?  
 How canst thou be love's god and know not this,  
 That love burns down the body's barriers cold  
 And laughs at difference—playing with it merely  
 To make joy sweeter? O too deeply I know,  
 The lover is not different from the loved,  
 Nor is their silence dumb to each other. He  
 Contains her heart and feels her body in his,  
 He flushes with her heat, chills with her cold.  
 And when she dies, oh! when she dies, oh me,  
 The emptiness, the maim! the life no life,  
 The sweet and passionate oneness lost! And if  
 By shortening of great grief won back, O price

Easy! O glad briefness, æons may envy!  
 For we shall live not fearing death, nor feel  
 As others yearning over the loved at night  
 When the lamp flickers, sudden chills of dread  
 Terrible; nor at short absence agonise,  
 Wrestling with mad imagination. Us  
 Serenely when the darkening shadow comes,  
 One common sob shall end and soul clasp soul,  
 Leaving the body in a long dim kiss.  
 Then in the joys of heaven we shall consort,  
 Amid the gladness often touching hands  
 To make bliss sure; or in the ghastly stream  
 If we must anguish, yet it shall not part  
 Our passionate limbs inextricably locked  
 By one strong agony, but we shall feel  
 Hell's pain half joy through sweet companionship.  
 God Love, I weary of words. O wing me rather  
 To her, my eloquent princess of the spring,  
 In whatsoever wintry shores she roam."  
 He ceased with eager forward eyes; once more  
 A light of beauty immortal through the limbs  
 Gleaming of the boy-god and soft sweet face,  
 Glorifying him, flushed, and he replied:  
 "Go then, O thou dear youth, and bear this flower  
 In thy hand warily. For thou shalt come  
 To that high meeting of the Ganges pure  
 With vague and violent Ocean. There arise  
 And loudly appeal my brother, the wild sea."  
 He spoke and stretched out his immortal hand,  
 And Ruru's met it. All his young limbs yearned  
 With dreadful rapture shuddering through them. He  
 Felt in his fingers subtle uncertain bloom,  
 A quivering magnificence, half fire,  
 Whose petals changed like flame, and from them breathed

Dangerous attraction and alarmed delight,  
 As at a peril near. He raised his eyes,  
 But the green place was empty of the God.  
 Only the faery tree looked up at heaven  
 Through branches, and with recent pleasure shook.  
 Then over fading earth the night was lord.

But from Shatudru and Bipasha, streams  
 Once holy, and loved Iravathi and swift  
 Clear Chandrabhaga and Bitosta's toil  
 For man, went Ruru to bright sumptuous lands  
 By Aryan fathers not yet paced, but wild,  
 But virgin to our fruitful human toil,  
 Where nature lay reclined in dumb delight  
 Alone with woodlands and the voiceless hills.  
 He with the widening yellow Ganges came,  
 Amazed, to trackless countries where few tribes,  
 Kirath and Poundrian, warred, worshipping trees  
 And the great serpent. But robust wild earth,  
 But forests with their splendid life of beasts  
 Savage mastered those strong inhabitants.  
 Thither came Ruru. In a thin soft eve  
 Ganges spread far her multitudinous waves,  
 A glimmering restlessness with voices large,  
 And from the forests of that half-seen bank  
 A boat came heaving over it, white-winged,  
 With a sole silent helmsman marble-pale.  
 Then Ruru by his side stepped in; they went  
 Down the mysterious river and beheld  
 The great banks widen out of sight. The world  
 Was water and the skies to water plunged.  
 All night with a dim motion gliding down  
 He felt the dark against his eyelids; felt,  
 As in a dream more real than daylight,

The helmsman with his dumb and marble face  
Near him and moving wideness all around,  
And that continual gliding dimly on,  
As one who on a shoreless water sails  
For ever to a port he shall not win.  
But when the darkness paled, he heard a moan  
Of mightier waves and had the wide great sense  
Of ocean and the depths below our feet.  
But the boat stopped; the pilot lifted on him  
His marble gaze coeval with the stars.  
Then in the white-winged boat the boy arose  
And saw around him the vast sea all grey  
And heaving in the pallid dawning light.  
Loud Ruru cried across the murmur: "Hear me,  
O inarticulate grey Ocean, hear.  
If any cadence in thy infinite  
Rumour was caught from lover's moan, O Sea,  
Open thy abysses to my mortal tread.  
For I would travel to the despairing shades,  
The spheres of suffering where entangled dwell  
Souls unreleased and the untimely dead  
Who weep remembering. Thither, O guide me,  
No despicable wayfarer, but Ruru,  
But son of a great Rishi, from all men  
On earth selected for peculiar pangs,  
Special disaster. Lo, this petalled fire,  
How freshly it blooms and lasts with my great pain!"  
He held the flower out subtly glimmering.  
And like a living thing the huge sea trembled,  
Then rose, calling, and filled the sight with waves,  
Converging all its giant crests; towards him  
Innumerable waters loomed and heaven  
Threatened. Horizon on horizon moved  
Dreadfully swift; then with a prone wide sound  
All Ocean hollowing drew him swiftly in,

Curving with monstrous menace over him.  
 He down the gulf where the loud waves collapsed  
 Descending, saw with floating hair arise  
 The daughters of the sea in pale green light,  
 A million mystic breasts suddenly bare,  
 And came beneath the flood and stunned beheld  
 A mute stupendous march of waters race  
 To reach some viewless pit beneath the world.  
 Ganges he saw, as men predestined rush  
 Upon a fearful doom foreseen, so run,  
 Alarmed, with anguished speed, the river vast.  
 Veiled to his eyes the triple goddess rose.  
 She with a sound of waters cried to him,  
 A thousand voices moaning with one pain:  
 "Lover, who fearedst not sunlight to leave,  
 With me thou mayst behold that helpless spirit  
 Lost in the gloom, if still thy burning bosom  
 Have courage to endure great Nature's night  
 In the dire lands where I, a goddess, mourn  
 Hurting my heart with my own cruelty."  
 She darkened to the ominous descent,  
 Unwilling, and her once so human waves  
 Sent forth a cry not meant for living ears.  
 And Ruru chilled; but terrible strong love  
 Was like a fiery finger in his breast  
 Pointing him on; so he through horror went  
 Conducted by inexorable sound.  
 For monstrous voices to his ear were close,  
 And bodiless terrors with their dimness seized him  
 In an obscurity phantasmal. Thus  
 With agony of soul to the grey waste  
 He came, glad of the pain of passage over,  
 As men who through the storms of anguish strive  
 Into abiding tranquil dreariness  
 And draw sad breath assured; to the grey waste,

Hopeless Patala, the immutable  
Country, where neither sun nor rain arrives,  
Nor happy labour of the human plough  
Fruitfully turns the soil, but in vague sands  
And indeterminable strange rocks and caverns  
That into silent blackness huge recede,  
Dwell the great serpent and his hosts, writhed forms,  
Sinuous, abhorred, through many horrible leagues  
Coiling in a half darkness. Shapes he saw,  
And heard the hiss and knew the lambent light  
Loathsome, but passed compelling his strong soul.  
At last through those six tired hopeless worlds,  
Too hopeless far for grief, pale he arrived  
Into a nether air by anguish moved,  
And heard before him cries that pierced the heart,  
Human, not to be borne, and issued shaken  
By the great river accursed. Maddened it ran  
Anguished, importunate, and in its waves  
The drifting ghosts their agony endured.  
There Ruru saw pale faces float of kings  
And grandiose victors and revered high priests  
And famous women. Now rose from the wave  
A golden shuddering arm and now a face.  
Torn piteous sides were seen and breasts that quailed.  
Over them moaned the penal waters on,  
And had no joy of their fierce cruelty.  
Then Ruru, his young cheeks with pity wan,  
Half moaned: "O miserable race of men,  
With violent and passionate souls you come  
Foredoomed upon the earth and live brief days  
In fear and anguish, catching at stray beams  
Of sunlight, little fragrances of flowers;  
Then from your spacious earth in a great horror  
Descend into this night, and here too soon  
Must expiate your few inadequate joys.

O bargain hard! Death helps us not. He leads  
 Alarmed, all shivering from his chill embrace,  
 The naked spirit here. On my sweet flower,  
 Art thou too whelmed in this fierce wailing flood?  
 Ah me! But I will haste and deeply plunge  
 Into its hopeless pools and either bring  
 Thy old warm beauty back beneath the stars,  
 Or find thee out and clasp thy tortured bosom  
 And kiss thy sweet wrung lips and hush thy cries.  
 Love shall draw half thy pain into my limbs;  
 Then we shall triumph glad of agony."  
 He ceased and one replied close by his ear:  
 "O thou who troublest with thy living eyes  
 Established death, pass on. She whom thou seekest  
 Rolls not in the accursèd tide. For late  
 I saw her mid those pale inhabitants  
 Whom bodily anguish visits not, but thoughts  
 Sorrowful and dumb memories absolve,  
 And martyrdom of scourged hearts quivering."  
 He turned and saw astride the dolorous flood  
 A mighty bridge paved with mosaic fire,  
 All restless, and a woman clothed in flame,  
 With hands calamitous that held a sword,  
 Stood of the quaking passage sentinel.  
 Magnificent and dire her burning face.  
 "Pass on," she said once more, "O Bhriḡu's son;  
 The flower protects thee from my hands." She stretched  
 One arm towards him and with violence  
 Majestic over the horrid arch compelled.  
 Unhurt, though shaking from her touch, alone  
 He stood upon an inner bank with strange  
 Black dreary mosses covered and perceived  
 A dim and level plain without one flower.  
 Over it paced a multitude immense  
 With gentle faces occupied by pain;

Strong men were there and grieving mothers, girls  
 With early beauty in their limbs and young  
 Sad children of their childlike faces robbed.  
 Naked they paced with falling hair and gaze  
 Drooping upon their bosoms, weak as flowers  
 That die for want of rain un murmuring.  
 Always a silence was upon the place.  
 But Ruru came among them. Suddenly  
 One felt him there and looked, then as a wind  
 Moves over a still field of patient corn,  
 And the ears stir and shudder and look up  
 And bend innumerably flowing, so  
 All those dumb spirits stirred and through them passed  
 One shuddering motion of raised faces; then  
 They streamed towards him without sound and caught  
 With desperate hands his robe or touched his hair  
 Or strove to feel upon them living breath.  
 Pale girls and quiet children came and knelt  
 And with large sorrowful eyes into his looked.  
 Yet with their silent passion the cold hush  
 Moved not; but Ruru's human heart half burst  
 With burden of so many sorrows; tears  
 Welled from him; he with anguish understood  
 That terrible and wordless sympathy  
 Of dead souls for the living. Then he turned  
 His eyes and scanned their lovely faces strange  
 For that one face and found it not. He paled,  
 And spoke vain words into the listless air:  
 "O spirits once joyous, miserable race,  
 Happier if the old gladness were forgot!  
 My soul yearns with your sorrow. Yet ah! reveal  
 If dwell my love in your sad nation lost.  
 Well may you know her, O wan beautiful spirits!  
 But she most beautiful of all that died,  
 By sweetness recognisable. Her name



The sunshine knew." Speaking his tears made way:  
 But they with dumb lips only looked at him,  
 A vague and empty mourning in their eyes.  
 He murmured low: " Ah, folly! were she here,  
 Would she not first have felt me, first have raised  
 Her lids and run to me, leaned back her face  
 Of silent sorrow on my breast and looked  
 With the old altered eyes into my own  
 And striven to make my anguish understand?  
 Oh joy, had she been here! for though her lips  
 Of their old excellent music quite were robbed,  
 Yet her dumb passion would have spoken to me;  
 We should have understood each other and walked  
 Silently hand in hand, almost content."  
 He said and passed through those untimely dead.  
 Speechless they followed him with clinging eyes.  
 Then to a solemn building weird he came  
 With grave colossal pillars round. One dome  
 Roofed the whole brooding edifice, like cloud,  
 And at the door strange shapes were pacing, armed.  
 Then from their fear the sweet and mournful dead  
 Drew back, returning to their wordless grief.  
 But Ruru to the perilous doorway strode,  
 And those disastrous shapes upon him raised  
 Their bows and aimed; but he held out Love's flower,  
 And with stern faces checked they let him pass.  
 He entered and beheld a silent hall  
 Dim and unbounded; moving then like one  
 Who up a dismal stair seeks ever light,  
 Attained a dais brilliant doubtfully  
 With flaming pediment and round it coiled  
 Python and Naga monstrous, Joruthearu,  
 Tuxuc and Vasuki himself, immense,  
 Magic Carcotaca all flecked with fire;  
 And many other prone destroying shapes

Coiled. On the wondrous dais rose a throne,  
 And he its pedestal whose lotus hood  
 With ominous beauty crowns his horrible  
 Sleek folds, great Mahapudma; high displayed  
 He bears the throne of Death. There sat supreme  
 With those compassionate and lethal eyes,  
 Who many names, who many natures holds;  
 Yama, the strong pure Hades sad and subtle,  
 Dharma, who keeps the laws of old untouched,  
 Critanta, who ends all things and at last  
 Himself shall end. On either side of him  
 The four-eyed dogs mysterious rested prone,  
 Watchful, with huge heads on their paws advanced;  
 And emanations of the godhead dim  
 Moved near him, shadowy or serpentine,  
 Vast Time and cold irreparable Death.  
 Then Ruru came and bowed before the throne;  
 And swaying all those figures stirred as shapes  
 Upon a tapestry moved by the wind,  
 And the sad voice was heard: "What breathing man  
 Bows at the throne of Hades? By what force,  
 Spiritual or communicated, troubles  
 His living beauty the dead grace of Hell?"  
 And one replied who seemed a neighbouring voice:  
 "He has the blood of Gods and Titans old.  
 An Apsara his mother liquid-orbed  
 Bore to the youthful Chyavan's strong embrace  
 This passionate face of earth with Eden touched.  
 Chyavan was Bhrigu's child, Puloma bore,  
 The Titaness,—Bhrigu, great Brahma's son.  
 Love gave the flower that helps by anguish; therefore  
 He chilled not with the breath of Hades, nor  
 The cry of the infernal stream made stone."  
 But at the name of Love all hell was moved.  
 Death's throne half faded into twilight; hissed

The phantoms serpentine as if in pain,  
 And the dogs raised their dreadful heads. Then spoke  
 Yama: "And what needs Love in this pale realm,  
 The warm great Love? All worlds his breath confounds,  
 Mars solemn order and old steadfastness.  
 But not in hell his legates come and go;  
 His vernal jurisdiction to bare Hell  
 Extends not. This last world resists his power  
 Youthful, anarchic. Here will he enlarge  
 Tumult and wanton joys?" The voice replied:  
 "Menaca momentary on the earth,  
 Heaven's Apsara by the fleeting hours beguiled  
 Played in the happy hidden glens; there bowed  
 To yoke of swift terrestrial joys she bore,  
 Immortal, to that fair Gundhurva king  
 A mortal blossom of delight. That bloom  
 Young Ruru found and plucked, but her too soon  
 Thy fatal hooded snake on earth surprised,  
 And he through gloom now travels armed by Love."  
 But then all Hades swaying towards him cried:  
 "O mortal, O misled! But sacrifice  
 Is stronger, nor may law of Hell or Heaven  
 Its fierce effectual action supersede.  
 Thy dead I yield. Yet thou bethink thee, mortal,  
 Not as a tedious evil nor to be  
 Lightly rejected gave the gods old age,  
 But tranquil, but august, but making easy  
 The steep ascent to God. Therefore must Time  
 Still batter down the glory and form of youth  
 And animal magnificent strong ease,  
 To warn the earthward man that he is spirit  
 Dallying with transience, nor by death he ends,  
 Nor to the dumb warm mother's arms is bound,  
 But called unborn into the unborn skies.  
 For body fades with the increasing soul

And wideness of its limit grown intolerant  
 Replaces life's impetuous joys by peace.  
 Youth, manhood, ripeness, age, four seasons  
 Twixt its return and pale departing life  
 Describes, O mortal,—youth that forward bends  
 Midst hopes, delights and dreamings; manhood deepens  
 To passions, toils and thoughts profound; but ripeness  
 For large reflective gathering-up of these,  
 As on a lonely slope whence men look back  
 Down towards the cities and the human fields  
 Where they too worked and laughed and loved; next age,  
 Wonderful age with those approaching skies.  
 That boon wilt thou renounce? Wherefore? To bring  
 For a few years—how miserably few!—  
 Her sunward who must after all return.  
 Ah, son of Rishis, cease. Lo, I remit  
 Hell's grasp, not oft-relinquished, and send back  
 Thy beautiful life unborrowed to the stars.  
 Or thou must render to the immutable  
 Total all thy fruit-bearing years; then she  
 Reblossoms." But the Shadow antagonist:  
 "Let him be shown the glory he would renounce."  
 And over the flaming pediment there moved,  
 As on a frieze a march of sculptures, carved  
 By Phidias for the Virgin strong and pure,  
 Most perfect once of all things seen in earth  
 Or Heaven, in Athens on the Acropolis,  
 But now dismembered, now disrupt! or as  
 In Buddhist cavern or Orissan temple,  
 Large aspirations architectural,  
 Warrior and dancing-girl, adept and king,  
 And conquering pomps and daily peaceful groups  
 Dream delicately on, softening with beauty  
 Great Bhuvanayshwar, the Almighty's house,

With sculptural suggestion so were limned  
 Scenes future on a pediment of fire.  
 There Ruru saw himself divine with age,  
 A Rishi to whom infinity is close,  
 Rejoicing in green wood or musical shade  
 Or boundless mountain-top where most we feel  
 Wideness, not by small happy things disturbed.  
 Around him, as around an ancient tree  
 Its seedlings, forms august or burning rose;  
 They grew beneath his hands and were his work;  
 Great kings whom time remembers and fertile  
 Deep minds and poets with their chanting lips  
 Whose words were seed of vast philosophies—  
 These worshipped; but above, half day, he saw  
 Amazed the dawn of that mysterious Face  
 And all the universe in beauty merge.  
 Mad the boy thrilled upwards, then spent ebbd back.  
 Over his mind, as birds across the sky  
 Sweep and are gone, the vision of those fields  
 And drooping faces came; almost he heard  
 The burdened river with human anguish wail.  
 And with a sudden fury gathering  
 His soul he hurled out of it half its life,  
 And fell, like lightning, prone. Triumphant rose  
 The Shadow chill and deepened giant night.  
 Only the dais flickered in the gloom,  
 And those snake-eyes of cruel fire subdued.  
 But suddenly a bloom, a fragrance. Hell  
 Shuddered with bliss. Resentful, overborne,  
 The world-besetting Terror faded back  
 Like one grown weak by desperate victory,  
 And a voice cried in Ruru's tired soul:  
 "Arise! the strife is over, easy now  
 The horror that thou hast to face, the burden  
 Now shared." And with a sudden burst like spring

Life woke in the strong lover over-tried.  
 He rose and left dim Death. Twelve times he crossed  
 Boithorini, the river dolorous,  
 Twelve times resisted Hell and hurried down  
 Into the ominous pit where plunges black  
 The vast stream thundering, saw, led puissantly  
 From night to unimaginable night,—  
 As men oppressed in dreams, who cannot wake,  
 But measure penal visions,—punishments  
 Whose sight pollutes, unheard-of tortures, pangs  
 Monstrous, intolerable mute agonies,  
 Twisted unmoving attitudes of pain,  
 Like thoughts inhuman in statuary. A fierce  
 And iron voicelessness had grasped those worlds.  
 No horror of cries expressed their endless pain,  
 No saving struggle, no breathings of the soul.  
 And in the last hell irremediable  
 Where Ganges clots into that fatal pool,  
 Appalled he saw her; pallid, listless, bare—  
 O other than that earthly warmth and grace  
 In which the happy roses deepened and dimmed  
 With come-and-go of swift enamoured blood!  
 Dumb drooped she; round her shapes of anger armed  
 Stood dark like thunderclouds. But Ruru sprang  
 Upon them, burning with the admitted God.  
 They from his touch like ineffectual fears  
 Vanished; then sole with her, trembling he cried  
 The old glad name and crying bent to her  
 And touched, and at the touch the silent knots  
 Of Hell were broken and its sombre dream  
 Of dreadful-stately pains at once dispersed.  
 Then as from one whom a surpassing joy  
 Has conquered, all the bright surrounding world  
 Streams swiftly into distance, and he feels  
 His daily senses slipping from his grasp,

So that unbearable enormous world  
 Went rolling mighty shades, like the wet mist  
 From men on mountain-tops; and sleep outstretched  
 Rising its soft arms towards him and his thoughts,  
 As on a bed, sank to ascending void.

But when he woke, he heard the koil insist  
 On sweetness and the voice of happy things  
 Content with sunlight. All around him, warm;  
 Was sense of old essential earth and custom  
 Familiar tranquillising body and mind,  
 As in its natural wave a lotus feels.  
 He looked and saw all grass and dense green trees,  
 And sunshine and a single grasshopper  
 Near him repeated fierily its note.  
 Thrilling he felt beneath his bosom her;  
 Oh, warm and breathing were those rescued limbs  
 Against the greenness, vivid, palpable, white,  
 With great black hair and real and her cheek's  
 Old softness and her mouth a dewy rose.  
 For many moments comforting his soul  
 With all her jasmine body sun-ensnared  
 He fed his longing eyes and, half in doubt,  
 With touches satisfied himself of her.  
 Hesitating he kissed her eyelids. Sighing  
 With a slight sob she woke and earthly large  
 Her eyes looked upward into his. She stretched  
 Her arms up, yearning, and their souls embraced;  
 Then twixt brief sobbing laughter and blissful tears,  
 Clinging with all her limbs to him, "O love,  
 The green green world! the warm sunlight!" and ceased,  
 Finding no words; but the earth breathed round them,  
 Glad of her children and the koil's voice  
 Persisted in the morning of the world.





# POEMS

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## Invitation

With wind and the weather beating round me  
Up to the hill and the moorland I go.  
Who will come with me? Who will climb with me?  
Wade through the brook and tramp through the snow?  
Not in the petty circle of cities  
Cramped by your doors and your walls I dwell;  
Over me God is blue in the welkin,  
Against me the wind and the storm rebel.  
I sport with solitude here in my regions,  
Of misadventure have made me a friend.  
Who would live largely? Who would live freely?  
Here to the wind-swept uplands ascend.  
I am the lord of tempest and mountain,  
I am the Spirit of freedom and pride.  
Stark must he be and a kinsman to danger  
Who shares my kingdom and walks at my side.

## Who

In the blue of the sky, in the green of the forest,  
Whose is the hand that has painted the glow?  
When the winds were asleep in the womb of the ether,  
Who was it roused them and bade them to blow?

He is lost in the heart, in the cavern of Nature,  
He is found in the brain where He builds up the thought:  
In the pattern and bloom of the flowers He is woven,  
In the luminous net of the stars He is caught.

In the strength of a man, in the beauty of woman,  
In the laugh of a boy, in the blush of a girl;  
The hand that sent Jupiter spinning through heaven,  
Spends all its cunning to fashion a curl.

These are His works and His veils and His shadows;  
But where is He then? by what name is He known?  
Is He Brahma or Vishnu? a man or a woman?  
Bodied, or bodiless? twin or alone?

We have love for a boy who is dark and resplendent,  
A woman is lord of us, naked and fierce.  
We have seen Him a-muse on the snow of the mountains,  
We have watched Him at work in the heart of the spheres.

We will tell the whole world of His ways and His cunning:  
He has rapture of torture and passion and pain;  
He delights in our sorrow and drives us to weeping,  
Then lures with His joy and His beauty again.

All music is only the sound of His laughter,  
All beauty the smile of His passionate bliss;  
Our lives are His heart-beats, our rapture the bridal  
Of Radha and Krishna, our love is their kiss.

He is strength that is loud in the blare of the trumpets,  
And He rides in the car and He strikes in the spears;  
He slays without stint and is full of compassion;  
He wars for the world and its ultimate years.

In the sweep of the worlds, in the surge of the ages,  
Ineffable, mighty, majestic and pure,  
Beyond the last pinnacle seized by the thinker  
He is throned in His seats that for ever endure.

The Master of man and his infinite Lover,  
He is close to our hearts, had we vision to see;  
We are blind with our pride and the pomp of our passions,  
We are bound in our thoughts where we hold ourselves free.

It is He in the sun who is ageless and deathless,  
And into the midnight His shadow is thrown;  
When darkness was blind and engulfed within darkness,  
He was seated within it immense and alone.

## Miracles

Snow in June may break from Nature,  
Ice through August last,  
The random rose may increase stature  
In December's blast;

But this at least can never be,  
O thou mortal ecstasy,  
That one should live, even in pain,  
Visited by thy disdain.

## Reminiscence

My soul arose at dawn and, listening, heard  
One voice abroad, a solitary bird,  
A song not master of its note, a cry  
That persevered into eternity.  
My soul leaned out into the dawn to hear  
In the world's solitude its winged compeer  
And, hearkening what the Angel had to say,  
Saw lustre in midnight and a secret day  
Was opened to it. It beheld the stars  
Born from a thought and knew how being prepares.  
Then I remembered how I woke from sleep  
And made the skies, built earth, formed Ocean deep.



## A Vision of Science

I dreamed that in myself the world I saw,  
Wherein three Angels strove for mastery. Law  
Was one, clear vision and denial cold,  
Yet in her limits strong, presumptuous, bold;  
The second with enthusiasm bright,  
Flame in her heart but round her brows the night,  
Faded as this advanced. She could not bear  
That searching gaze, nor the strong chilling air  
These thoughts created, nourishing our parts  
Of mind, but petrifying human hearts.  
Science was one, the other gave her name,  
Religion. But a third behind them came,  
Veiled, vague, remote, and had as yet no right  
Upon the world, but lived in her own light.  
Wide were the victories of the Angel proud  
Who conquered now and in her praise were loud  
The nations. Few even yet to the other clove,—  
And some were souls of night and some were souls of love.  
But this was confident and throned. Her heralds ranged  
Claiming that night was dead and all things changed;  
For all things opened, all seemed clear, seemed bright—  
Save the vast ranges that they left in night.  
However, the light they shed upon the earth  
Was great indeed, a firm and mighty birth.  
A century's progress lived before my eyes.  
Delivered from amazement and surprise,  
Man's spirit measuring his worlds around  
The laws of sight divined and laws of sound.  
Light was not hidden from its searching gaze,  
Nor matter could deny her myriad maze

To the cold enquiry; for the far came near,  
 The small loomed large, the intricate grew clear.  
 Measuring and probing the strong Angel strode,  
 Dissolving and combining, till she trod  
 Firmly among the stars, could weigh their forms,  
 Foretold the earthquakes, analysed the storms.  
 Doubt seemed to end and wonder's reign was closed.  
 The stony pages of the earth disclosed  
 Their unremembered secrets. Horses of steam  
 Were bitted and the lightnings made a team  
 To draw our chariots. Heaven was scaled at last  
 And the loud seas subdued. Distance resigned  
 Its strong obstructions to the mastering mind.  
 So moved that spirit trampling; then it laid  
 Its hand at last upon itself, how this was made  
 Wondering, and sought to class and sought to trace  
 Mind by its forms, the wearer by the dress.  
 Then the other arose and met that spirit robust,  
 Who laboured; she now grew a shade who must  
 Fade wholly away, yet to her fellow cried,  
 "I pass, for thou hast laboured well and wide.  
 Thou thinkest term and end for thee are not;  
 But though thy pride is great, thou hast forgot  
 The Sphinx that waits for man beside the way.  
 All questions thou mayst answer, but one day  
 Her question shall await thee. That reply,  
 As all we must; for they, who cannot, die.  
 She slays them and their mangled bodies lie  
 Upon the highways of eternity.  
 Therefore, if thou wouldst live, know first this thing,  
 Who thou art in this dungeon labouring."  
 And Science confidently, "Nothing am I but earth,  
 Tissue and nerve and from the seed a birth,  
 A mould, a plasm, a gas, a little that is much.  
 In these grey cells that quiver to each touch

The secret lies of man; they are the thing called I.  
Matter insists and matter makes reply.  
Shakespeare was this; this force in Jesus yearned  
And conquered by the cross; this only learned  
The secret of the suns that blaze afar;  
This was Napoleon's giant mind of war."  
I heard and marvelled in myself to see  
The infinite deny infinity.  
Yet the weird paradox seemed justified;  
Even mysticism shrank out-mystified.  
But the third Angel came and touched my eyes;  
I saw the mornings of the future rise,  
I heard the voices of an age unborn  
That comes behind us and our pallid morn,  
And from the heart of an approaching light  
One said to man, "Know thyself infinite,  
Who shalt do mightier miracles than these,  
Infinite, moving mid infinities."  
Then from our hills the ancient answer pealed,  
"For Thou, O Splendour, art myself concealed,  
And the grey cell contains me not, the star  
I outmeasure and am older than the elements are.  
Whether on earth or far beyond the sun,  
I, stumbling, clouded, am the Eternal One."

## Immortal Love

If I had wooed thee for thy colour rare,  
Cherished the rose in thee  
Or wealth of Nature's brilliants in thy hair,  
O woman fair,  
My love might cease to be.

Or, had I sought thee for thy virtuous youth  
And tender yearning speech,  
Thy swift compassion and deliberate truth,  
O heart of ruth,  
Time might pursue, might reach.

But I have loved thee for thyself indeed  
And with myself have snared;  
Immortal to immortal I made speed.  
Change I exceed  
And am for Time prepared.

## A Tree

A tree beside the sandy river-beach  
Holds up its topmost boughs  
Like fingers towards the skies they cannot reach,  
Earth-bound, heaven-amorous.

This is the soul of man. Body and brain  
Hungry for earth our heavenly flight detain.

## To the Sea

O grey wild sea,  
 Thou hast a message, thunderer, for me.  
 Their huge wide backs  
 Thy monstrous billows raise, abysmal cracks  
 Dug deep between.  
 One pale boat flutters over them, hardly seen.  
 I hear thy roar  
 Call me, "Why dost thou linger on the shore  
 With fearful eyes  
 Watching my tops visit their foam-washed skies?  
 This trivial boat  
 Dares my vast battering billows and can float.  
 Death if it find,  
 Are there not many thousands left behind?  
 Dare my wide roar,  
 Nor cling like cowards to the easy shore.  
 Come down and know  
 What rapture lives in danger and o'erthrow."  
 Yes, thou great sea,  
 I am more mighty and outbillow thee.  
 On thy tops I rise;  
 'Tis an excuse to dally with the skies.  
 I sink below  
 The bottom of the clamorous world to know.  
 On the safe land  
 To linger is to lose what God has planned

For man's wide soul,  
Who set eternal godhead for its goal.

Therefore he arrayed  
Danger and difficulty like seas and made

Pain and defeat,  
And put His giant snares around our feet.

The cloud He informs  
With thunder and assails us with His storms,

That man may grow  
King over pain and victor of o'erthrow

Matching his great  
Unconquerable soul with adverse Fate.

Take me, be  
My way to climb the heavens, thou rude great sea.

I will seize thy mane,  
O lion, I will tame thee and disdain;

Or else below  
Into thy salt abysmal caverns go,

Receive thy weight  
Upon me and be stubborn as my Fate.

I come, O Sea,  
To measure my enormous self with thee.

## Revelation

Someone leaping from the rocks  
Past me ran with wind-blown locks  
Like a startled bright surmise  
Visible to mortal eyes,—  
Just a cheek of frightened rose  
That with sudden beauty glows,  
Just a footstep like the wind  
And a hurried glance behind,  
And then nothing,—as a thought  
Escapes the mind ere it is caught.  
Someone of the heavenly rout  
From behind the veil ran out.

## Karma

*(Radha's Complaint)*

Love, but my words are vain as air!  
In my sweet joyous youth, a heart untried,  
Thou took'st me in Love's sudden snare,  
Thou wouldst not let me in my home abide.

And now I have nought else to try,  
But I will make my soul one strong desire  
And into Ocean leaping die:  
So shall my heart be cooled of all its fire.

Die and be born to life again  
As Nanda's son, the joy of Braja's girls,  
And I will make thee Radha then,  
A laughing child's face set with lovely curls.

Then I will love thee and then leave;  
Under the codome's boughs when thou goest by  
Bound to the water morn or eve,  
Lean on that tree fluting melodiously.

Thou shalt hear me and fall at sight  
Under my charm; my voice shall wholly move  
Thy simple girl's heart to delight;  
Then shalt thou know the bitterness of love.

*[From an old Bengali poem]*



## Appeal

Thy youth is but a noon, of night take heed,—  
 A noon that is a fragment of a day,  
 And the swift eve all sweet things bears away,  
 All sweet things and all bitter, rose and weed.  
 For others' bliss who lives, he lives indeed.

But thou art pitiful and ruth shouldst know.  
 I bid thee trifle not with fatal love,  
 But save our pride and dear one, O my dove,  
 And heaven and earth and the nether world below  
 Shall only with thy praises peopled grow.

Life is a bliss that cannot long abide,  
 But while thou livest, love. For love the sky  
 Was founded, earth upheaved from the deep cry  
 Of waters, and by love is sweetly tied  
 The golden cordage of our youth and pride.

*[Suggested by an old Bengali poem]*

## A Child's Imagination

O thou golden image,  
    Miniature of bliss,  
Speaking sweetly, speaking meetly!  
    Every word deserves a kiss.

Strange, remote and splendid  
    Childhood's fancy pure  
Thrills to thoughts we cannot fathom,  
    Quick felicities obscure.

When the eyes grow solemn  
    Laughter fades away,  
Nature of her mighty childhood  
    Recollects the Titan play;

Woodlands touched by sunlight  
    Where the elves abode,  
Giant meetings, Titan greetings,  
    Fancies of a youthful God.

These are coming on thee  
    In thy secret thought;  
God remembers in thy bosom  
    All the wonders that He wrought.

## The Sea at Night

The grey sea creeps half-visible, half-hushed,  
And grasps with its innumerable hands  
These silent walls. I see beyond a rough  
Glimmering infinity, I feel the wash  
And hear the sibilation of the waves  
That whisper to each other as they push  
To shoreward side by side,—long lines and dim  
Of movement flecked with quivering spots of foam,  
The quiet welter of a shifting world.

## The Vedantin's Prayer

Spirit Supreme

Who musest in the silence of the heart,  
Eternal gleam,

Thou only Art!

Ah, wherefore with this darkness am I veiled,  
My sunlit part

By clouds assailed?

Why am I thus disfigured by desire,  
Distracted, haled,

Scorched by the fire

Of fitful passions, from thy peace out-thrust  
Into the gyre

Of every gust?

Betrayed to grief, o'ertaken with dismay,  
Surprised by lust?

Let not my grey

Blood-clotted past repel thy sovereign ruth,  
Nor even delay,

O lonely Truth!

Nor let the specious gods who ape Thee still  
Deceive my youth.

These clamours still;

For I would hear the eternal voice and know  
The eternal Will.

This brilliant show  
    Cumbering the threshold of eternity  
Dispel,—bestow

The undimmed eye,  
    The heart grown young and clear. Rebuke, O Lord,  
These hopes that cry

So deafeningly,  
    Remove my sullied centuries, restore  
My purity.

O hidden door  
    Of Knowledge, open! Strength, fulfil thyself!  
Love, outpour!

## Rebirth

Not soon is God's delight in us completed,  
Nor with one life we end;  
Termlessly in us are our spirits seated  
And termless joy intend.

Our souls and heaven are of an equal stature  
And have a dateless birth;  
The unending seed, the infinite mould of Nature,  
They were not made on earth,

Nor to the earth do they bequeath their ashes,  
But in themselves they last.  
An endless future brims beneath thy lashes,  
Child of an endless past.

Old memories come to us, old dreams invade us,  
Lost people we have known,  
Fictions and pictures; but their frames evade us,—  
They stand out bare, alone.

Yet all we dream and hope are memories treasured,  
Are forecasts we misspell,  
But of what life or scene he who has measured  
The boundless heavens can tell.

Time is a strong convention; future and present  
Were living in the past;  
They are one image that our wills complaisant  
Into three schemes have cast.

Our past that we forget, is with us deathless,  
Our births and later end  
Already accomplished. To a summit breathless  
Sometimes our souls ascend,

Whence the mind comes back helped; for there emerges  
The ocean vast of Time  
Spread out before us with its infinite surges,  
Its symphonies sublime;

And even from this veil of mind the spirit  
Looks out sometimes and sees  
The bygone æons that our lives inherit,  
The unborn centuries:

It sees wave-trampled realms expel the Ocean,—  
From the vague depths uphurled  
Where now Himaloy stands, the flood's huge motion  
Sees measuring half the world;

Or else the web behind us is unravelled  
And on its threads we gaze,—  
Past motions of the stars, scenes long since travelled  
In Time's far-backward days.

## The Triumph-Song of Trishuncou

I shall not die.

Although this body, when the spirit tires  
Of its cramped residence, shall feed the fires,  
My house consumes, not I.

Leaving that case

I find out ample and ethereal room.  
My spirit shall avoid the hungry tomb,  
Deceiving death's embrace.

Night shall contain

The sun in its cold depths; Time too must cease;  
The stars that labour shall have their release.  
I cease not, I remain.

Ere the first seeds

Were sown on earth, I was already old,  
And when now unborn planets shall grow cold  
My history proceeds.

I am the light

In stars, the strength of lions and the joy  
Of mornings; I am man and maid and boy,  
Protean, infinite.

I am a tree

That stands out singly from the infinite blue;  
I am the quiet falling of the dew  
And am the unmeasured sea.

I hold the sky

Together and upbear the teeming earth.  
I was the eternal thinker at my birth  
And shall be, though I die.



## Life and Death

Life, death,—death, life; the words have led for ages  
 Our thought and consciousness and firmly seemed  
 Two opposites; but now long-hidden pages  
 Are opened, liberating truths undreamed.  
 Life only is, or death is life disguised,—  
 Life a short death until by life we are surprised.

## Evening

A golden evening, when the thoughtful sun  
 Rejects its usual pomp in going, trees  
 That bend down to their green companion  
 And fruitful mother, vaguely whispering,—these  
 And a wide silent sea. Such hour is nearest God,—  
 Like rich old age when the long ways have all been trod.

## Parabrahman

These wanderings of the suns, these stars at play  
In the due measure that they chose of old,  
Nor only these, but all the immense array  
Of objects that long Time, far Space can hold,  
Are divine moments. They are thoughts that form,  
They are vision in the Self of things august  
And therefore grandly real. Rule and norm  
Are processes that they themselves adjust.  
The Self of things is not their outward view,  
A Force within decides. That Force is He;  
His movement is the shape of things we knew,  
Movement of Thought is Space and Time. A free  
And sovereign master of His world within,  
He is not bound by what He does or makes,  
He is not bound by virtue or by sin,  
Awake who sleeps and when He sleeps awakes.  
He is not bound by waking or by sleep;  
He is not bound by anything at all.  
Laws are that He may conquer them. To creep  
Or soar is at His will, to rise or fall.  
One from of old possessed Himself above  
Who was not anyone nor had a form,  
Nor yet was formless. Neither hate nor love  
Could limit His perfection, peace nor storm.  
He is, we cannot say; for Nothing too  
Is His conception of Himself unguessed.  
He dawns upon us and we would pursue,  
But who has found Him or what arms possessed?

He is not anything, yet all is He;  
 He is not all but far exceeds that scope.  
 Both Time and Timelessness sink in that sea:  
 Time is a wave and Space a wandering drop.  
 Within Himself He shadowed Being forth,  
 Which is a younger birth, a veil He chose  
 To half-conceal Him, Knowledge, nothing worth  
 Save to have glimpses of its mighty cause,  
 And high Delight, a spirit infinite,  
 That is the fountain of this glorious world,  
 Delight that labours in its opposite,  
 Faints in the rose and on the rack is curled.  
 This was the triune playground that He made  
 And One there sports awhile. He plucks His flowers  
 And by His bees is stung; He is dismayed,  
 Flees from Himself or has His sullen hours.  
 The Almighty One knew labour, failure, strife;  
 Knowledge forgot divined itself again:  
 He made an eager death and called it life,  
 He stung Himself with bliss and called it pain.

## God

Thou who pervadest all the worlds below,  
 Yet sitst above,  
 Master of all who work and rule and know,  
 Servant of Love!

Thou who disdainest not the worm to be  
 Nor even the clod,  
 Therefore we know by that humility  
 That thou art God.

## The Fear of Death

Death wanders through our lives at will, sweet Death  
Is busy with each intake of our breath.  
Why do you fear her? Lo, her laughing face  
All rosy with the light of jocund grace!  
A kind and lovely maiden culling flowers  
In a sweet garden fresh with vernal showers,  
This is the thing you fear, young portress bright  
Who opens to our souls the worlds of light.  
Is it because the twisted stem must feel  
Pain when the tenderest hands its glory steal?  
Is it because the flowerless stalk droops dull  
And ghastly now that was so beautiful?  
Or is it the opening portal's horrid jar  
That shakes you, feeble souls of courage bare?  
Death is but changing of our robes to wait  
In wedding garments at the Eternal's gate.

## Seasons

Day and night begin, you tell me,  
When the sun may choose to set or rise.  
Well, it may be; but for me their changing  
Is determined only by her eyes.

Summer, spring, the fruitless winter  
Hinge, you say, upon the heavenly sun?  
Oh, but I have known a yearlong winter!  
Spring was by her careless smiles begun.

## The Rishi

*King Manu in the former ages of the world, when the Arctic continent still subsisted, seeks knowledge from the Rishi of the Pole, who after long baffling him with conflicting side-lights of the knowledge, reveals to him what it chiefly concerns man to know.*

### MANU

Rishi who trance-held on the mountains old  
 Art slumbering, void  
 Of sense or motion, for in the spirit's hold  
 Of unalloyed  
 Immortal bliss thou dreamst protected! Deep  
 Let my voice glide  
 Into thy dumb retreat and break that sleep  
 Abysmal. Hear!  
 The frozen snows that heap thy giant bed  
 Ice-cold and clear,  
 The chill and desert heavens above thee spread  
 Vast, austere,  
 Are not so sharp but that thy warm limbs brook  
 Their bitter breath,  
 Are not so wide as thy immense outlook  
 On life and death:  
 Their vacancy thy silent mind and bright  
 Outmeasureth.  
 But ours are blindly active and thy light  
 We have forgone.

### RISHI

Who art thou, warrior armed gloriously  
 Like the sun?  
 Thy gait is as an empire and thine eye  
 Dominion.

MANU

King Manu, of the Aryan peoples lord,  
Greets thee, Sage.

RISHI

I know thee, King, earth to whose sleepless sword  
Was heritage.  
The high Sun's distant glories gave thee forth  
On being's edge:  
Where the slow skies of the auroral North  
Lead in the morn  
And flaming dawns for ever on heaven's verge  
Wheel and turn,  
'Thundering remote the clamorous Arctic surge  
Saw thee born.  
There 'twas thy lot these later Fates to build,  
This race of man  
New-fashion. O watcher with the mountains wild,  
The icy plain,  
Thee I too, asleep, have watched, both when the Pole  
Was brightening wan  
And when like a wild beast the darkness stole  
Prowling and slow  
Alarming with its silent march the soul.  
O King, I know  
Thy purpose; for the vacant ages roll  
Since man below  
Conversed with God in friendship. Thou, reborn  
For men perplexed,  
Seekest in this dim æon and forlorn  
With evils vexed  
The vanished light. For like this Arctic land  
Death has annexed

To sleep, our being's summits cold and grand  
     Where God abides,  
 Repel the tread of thought. I too, O King,  
     In winds and tides  
 Have sought Him, and in armies thundering,  
     And where Death strides  
 Over whole nations. Action, thought and peace  
     Were questioned, sleep,  
 And waking, but I had no joy of these,  
     Nor ponderings deep,  
 And pity was not sweet enough, nor good  
     My will could keep.  
 Often I found Him for a moment, stood  
     Astonished, then  
 It fell from me. I could not hold the bliss,  
     The force for men,  
 My brothers. Beauty ceased my heart to please,  
     Brightness in vain  
 Recalled the vision of the light that glows  
     Suns behind:  
 I hated the rich fragrance of the rose;  
     Weary and blind,  
 I tired of the suns and stars; then came  
     With broken mind  
 To heal me of the rash devouring flame,  
     The dull disease,  
 And sojourned with this mountain's summits bleak,  
     These frozen seas.  
 King, the blind dazzling snows have made me meek,  
     Cooled my unease.  
 Pride could not follow, nor the restless will  
     Come and go;  
 My mind within grew holy, calm and still  
     Like the snow.

MANU

O thou who wast with chariots formidable  
And with the bow!  
Voiceless and white the cold unchanging hill,  
Has it then  
A mightier presence, deeper mysteries  
Than human men?  
The warm low hum of crowds, towns, villages,  
The sun and rain,  
The village maidens to the water bound,  
The happy herds,  
The fluting of the shepherd lads, the sound  
Myriad of birds,  
Speak these not clearer to the heart, convey  
More subtle words?  
Here is but great dumb night, an awful day  
Inert and dead.

RISHI

The many's voices fill the listening ear,  
Distract the head:  
The One is silence; on the snows we hear  
Silence tread.

MANU

What hast thou garnered from the crags that lour,  
The icy field?

RISHI

O King, I spurned this body's death; a Power  
There was, concealed,  
That raised me. Rescued from the pleasant bars  
Our longings build,  
My wingèd soul went up above the stars  
Questing for God.



## MANU

Oh, didst thou meet Him then? in what bright field  
Upon thy road?

## RISHI

I asked the heavenly wanderers as they wheeled  
For His abode.

## MANU

Could glorious Saturn and his rings of hue  
Direct thy flight?

## RISHI

Sun could not tell, nor any planet knew  
Its source of light,  
Nor could I glean that knowledge though I paced  
The world's beyond  
And into outer nothingness have gazed.  
Time's narrow sound  
I crossed, the termless flood where on the Snake  
One slumbers throned,  
Attempted. But the ages from Him break  
Blindly and Space  
Forgets its origin. Then I returned  
Where luminous blaze  
Deathless and ageless in their ease unearned  
The ethereal race.

## MANU

Did the gods tell thee? Has Varuna seen  
The high God's face?

## RISHI

How shall they tell of Him who marvel at sin  
And smile at grief?

MANU

Did He not send His blissful Angels down  
For thy relief?

RISHI

The Angels know Him not, who fear His frown,  
Have fixed belief.

MANU

Is there no heaven of eternal light  
Where He is found?

RISHI

The heavens of the Three have beings bright  
Their portals round,  
And I have journeyed to those regions blest,  
Those hills renowned.  
In Vishnu's house where wide Love builds his nest,  
My feet have stood.

MANU

Is he not That, the blue-winged Dove of peace,  
Father of Good?

RISHI

Nor Brahma, though the suns and hills and seas  
Are called his brood.

MANU

Is God a dream then? are the heavenly coasts  
Visions vain?

RISHI

I came to Shiva's roof; the flitting ghosts  
Compelled me in.

MANU

Is He then God whom the forsaken seek,  
Things of sin?

RISHI

He sat on being's summit grand, a peak  
Immense of fire.

MANU

Knows He the secret of release from tears  
And from desire?

RISHI

His voice is the last murmur silence hears,  
Tranquil and dire.

MANU

The silence calls us then and shall enclose?

RISHI

Our true abode  
Is here and in the pleasant house He chose  
To harbour God.

MANU

In vain thou hast travelled the unwonted stars  
And the void hast trod!

RISHI

King, not in vain. I knew the tedious bars  
That I had fled,  
To be His arms whom I have sought; I saw  
How earth was made  
Out of His being; I perceived the Law,  
The Truth, the Vast,  
From which we came and which we are; I heard  
The ages past

Whisper their history, and I knew the Word  
That forth was cast  
Into the unformed potency of things  
To build the suns.  
Through endless Space and on Time's iron wings  
A rhythm runs  
Our lives pursue, and till the strain's complete  
That now so moans  
And falters, we upon this greenness meet,  
That measure tread.

MANU

Is earth His seat? this body His poor hold  
Infirmly made?

RISHI

I flung off matter like a robe grown old;  
Matter was dead.

MANU

Sages have told of vital force behind:  
It is God then?

RISHI

The vital spirits move but as a wind  
Within men.

MANU

Mind then is lord that like a sovereign sways  
Delight and pain?

RISHI

Mind is His wax to write and, written, rase  
Form and name.

## MANU

Is thought not He who has immortal eyes  
Time cannot dim?

## RISHI

Higher, O King, the still voice bade me rise  
Than thought's clear dream.  
Deep in the luminous secrecy, the mute  
Profound of things,  
Where murmurs never sound of harp or lute  
And no voice sings,  
Light is not, nor our darkness, nor these bright  
Thunderings,  
In the deep steady voiceless core of white  
And burning bliss,  
The sweet vast centre and the cave divine  
Called Paradise,  
He dwells within us all who dwells not in  
Aught that is.

## MANU

Rishi, thy thoughts are like the blazing sun  
Eye cannot face.  
How shall our souls on that bright awful One  
Hope even to gaze  
Who lights the world from His eternity  
With a few rays?

## RISHI

Dare on thyself to look, thyself art He,  
O Aryan, then.  
There is no thou nor I, beasts of the field,  
Nor birds, nor men,  
But flickerings on a many-sided shield  
Pass and remain,

And this is winged and that with poisonous tongue  
Hissing coils.  
We love ourselves and hate ourselves, are wrung  
With woes and toils  
To slay ourselves or from ourselves to win  
Shadowy spoils.  
And through it all, the rumour and the din,  
Voices roam,  
Voices of harps, voices of rolling seas,  
That rarely come  
And to our inborn old affinities  
Call us home.  
Shadows upon the many-sided Mind  
Arrive and go,  
Shadows that shadows see; the vain pomps wind  
Above, below,  
While in their hearts the single mighty God  
Whom none can know,  
Guiding the mimic squadrons with His nod  
Watches it all—  
Like transient shapes that sweep with half-guessed truth  
A luminous wall.

MANU

Alas! is life then vain? Our gorgeous youth  
Lithe and tall,  
Our sweet fair women with their tender eyes  
Outshining stars,  
The mighty meditations of the wise,  
The grandiose wars,  
The blood, the fiery strife, the clenched dead hands,  
The circle sparse,  
The various labour in a hundred lands,  
Are all these shows

To please some audience cold? as in a vase  
 Lily and rose,  
 Mixed snow and crimson, for a moment blaze  
 Till someone throws  
 The withered petals in some outer dust,  
 Heeding not,—  
 The virtuous man made one with the unjust,  
 Is this our lot?

## RISHI

O King, sight is not vain, nor any sound.  
 Weeds that float  
 Upon a puddle and the majestic round  
 Of the suns  
 Are thoughts eternal,—what man loves to laud  
 And what he shuns;  
 Through glorious things and base the wheel of God  
 For ever runs.  
 O King, no thought is vain; our very dreams  
 Substantial are;  
 The light we see in fancy, yonder gleams  
 In the star.

## MANU

Rishi, are we both dreams and real? the near  
 Even as the far?

## RISHI

Dreams are we not, O King, but see dreams, fear  
 Therefore and strive.  
 Like poets in a wondrous world of thought  
 Always we live,  
 Whose shapes from out ourselves to being brought  
 Abide and thrive.

The poet from his vast and labouring mind  
Brings brilliant out  
A living world; forth into space they wind,  
The shining rout,  
And hate and love, and laugh and weep, enjoy,  
Fight and shout,  
King, lord and beggar, tender girl and boy,  
Foemen, friends;  
So to His creatures God's poetic mind  
A substance lends.  
The Poet with dazzling inspiration blind,  
Until it ends,  
Forgets Himself and lives in what He forms;  
For ever His soul  
Through chaos like a wind creating storms,  
Till the stars roll  
Through ordered space and the green lands arise,  
The snowy Pole,  
Ocean and this great heaven full of eyes,  
And sweet sounds heard,  
Man with his wondrous soul of hate and love,  
And beast and bird,—  
Yes, He creates the worlds and heaven above  
With a single word;  
And these things being Himself are real, yet  
Are they like dreams,  
For He awakes to self He could forget  
In what He seems.  
Yet, King, deem nothing vain: through many veils  
This Spirit gleams.  
The dreams of God are truths and He prevails.  
Then all His time  
Cherish thyself, O King, and cherish men,  
Anchored in Him.



## MANU

Upon the silence of the sapphire main  
 Waves that sublime  
 Rise at His word and when that fiat's stilled  
 Are hushed again,  
 So is it, Rishi, with the Spirit concealed,  
 Things and men?

## RISHI

Hear then the truth. Behind this visible world  
 The eyes see plain,  
 Another stands, and in its folds are curled  
 Our waking dreams.  
 Dream is more real, which, while here we wake,  
 Unreal seems.  
 From that our mortal life and thoughts we take.  
 Its fugitive gleams  
 Are here made firm and solid; there they float  
 In a magic haze,  
 Melody swelling note on absolute note,  
 A lyric maze,  
 Beauty on beauty heaped pell-mell to chain  
 The enchanted gaze,  
 Thought upon mighty thought with grandiose strain  
 Weaving the stars.  
 This is that world of dream from which our race  
 Came; by these bars  
 Of body now enchained, with laggard pace,  
 Borne down with cares,  
 A little of that rapture to express  
 We labour hard,  
 A little of that beauty, music, thought  
 With toil prepared;

And if a single strain is clearly caught,  
Then our reward  
Is great on earth, and in the world that floats  
Lingering awhile  
We hear the fullness and the jarring notes  
Reconcile,—  
Then travel forwards. So we slowly rise,  
And every mile  
Of our long journey mark with eager eyes;  
So we progress  
With gurge of revolution and recoil,  
Slaughter and stress  
Of anguish because without fruit we toil,  
Without success;  
Even as a ship upon the stormy flood  
With fluttering sails  
Labours towards the shore; the angry mood  
Of Ocean swells,  
Calms come and favouring winds, but yet afar  
The harbour pales  
In evening mists and Ocean threatens war:  
Such is our life.  
Of this be sure, the mighty game goes on,  
The glorious strife,  
Until the goal predestined has been won.  
Not on the cliff  
To be shattered has our ship set forth of old,  
Nor in the surge  
To founder. Therefore, King, be royal, bold,  
And through the urge  
Of winds, the reboant thunders and the close  
Tempestuous gurge  
Press on for ever laughing at the blows  
Of wind and wave.

The haven must be reached; we rise from pyre,  
     We rise from grave,  
 We mould our future by our past desire,  
     We break, we save,  
 We find the music that we could not find,  
     The thought think out  
 We could not then perfect, and from the mind  
     That brilliant rout  
 Of wonders marshal into living forms.  
     End then thy doubt;  
 Grieve not for wounds, nor fear the violent storms,  
     For grief and pain  
 Are errors of the clouded soul; behind  
     They do not stain  
 The living spirit who to these is blind.  
     Torture, disdain,  
 Defeat and sorrow give him strength and joy:  
     'Twas for delight  
 He sought existence, and if pains alloy,  
     'Tis here in night  
 Which we call day. The Yogin knows, O King,  
     Who in his might  
 Travels beyond the mind's imagining,  
     The worlds of dream.  
 For even they are shadows, even they  
     Are not,—they seem.  
 Behind them is a mighty blissful day  
     From which they stream.  
 The heavens of a million creeds are these:  
     Peopled they teem  
 By creatures full of joy and radiant ease.  
     There is the mint  
 From which we are the final issue, types  
     Which here we print

In dual letters. There no torture grips,  
Joy cannot stint  
Her streams,—beneath a more than mortal sun  
Through golden air  
The spirits of the deathless regions run.  
But we must dare  
To still the mind into a perfect sleep  
And leave this lair  
Of gross material flesh which we would keep  
Always, before  
The guardians of felicity will ope  
The golden door.  
That is our home and that the secret hope  
Our hearts explore.  
To bring those heavens down upon the earth  
We all descend,  
And fragments of it in the human birth  
We can command.  
Perfect millenniums are sometimes, until  
In the sweet end  
All secret heaven upon earth we spill,  
Then rise above  
Taking mankind with us to the abode  
Of rapturous Love,  
The bright epiphany whom we name God,  
Towards whom we drove  
In spite of weakness, evil, grief and pain.  
He stands behind  
The worlds of Sleep; He is and shall remain  
When they grow blind  
To individual joys; for even these  
Are shadows, King,  
And gloriously into that lustre cease  
From which they spring.

We are but sparks of that most perfect fire,  
 Waves of that sea:  
 From Him we come, to Him we go, desire  
 Eternally,  
 And so long as He wills, our separate birth  
 Is and shall be.  
 Shrink not from life, O Aryan, but with mirth  
 And joy receive  
 His good and evil, sin and virtue, till  
 He bids thee leave.  
 But while thou livest, perfectly fulfil  
 Thy part, conceive  
 Earth as thy stage, thyself the actor strong,  
 The drama His.  
 Work, but the fruits to God alone belong,  
 Who only is.  
 Work, love and know,—so shall thy spirit win  
 Immortal bliss.  
 Love men, love God. Fear not to love, O King,  
 Fear not to enjoy;  
 For Death's a passage, grief a fancied thing  
 Fools to annoy.  
 From self escape and find in love alone  
 A higher joy.

## MANU

O Rishi, I have wide dominion,  
 The earth obeys  
 And heaven opens far beyond the sun  
 Her golden gaze.  
 But Him I seek, the still and perfect One,—  
 The Sun, not rays.

RISHI

Seek Him upon the earth. For thee He set  
In the huge press  
Of many worlds to build a mighty state  
For man's success,  
Who seeks his goal. Perfect thy human might,  
Perfect the race.  
For thou art He, O King. Only the night  
Is on thy soul  
By thy own will. Remove it and recover  
The serene whole  
Thou art indeed, then raise up man the lover  
To God the goal.

## In the Moonlight

If now must pause the bullocks' jingling tune,  
     Here let it be beneath the dreaming trees  
     Supine and huge that hang upon the breeze,  
 Here in the wide eye of the silent moon.

How living a stillness reigns! The night's hushed rules  
     All things obey but three, the slow wind's sigh  
     Among the leaves, the cricket's ceaseless cry,  
 The frog's harsh discord in the ringing pools.

Yet they but seem the silence to increase  
     And dreadful wideness of the inhuman night.  
     The whole hushed world immeasurable might  
 Be watching round this single spot of peace.

So boundless is the darkness and so rife  
     With thoughts of infinite reach that it creates  
     A dangerous sense of space and abrogates  
 The wholesome littleness of human life.

The common round that each of us must tread  
     Now seems a thing unreal; we forget  
     The heavy yoke the world on us has set,  
 The slave's vain labour earning tasteless bread.

Space hedges us and Time our hearts o'ertakes;  
     Our bounded senses and our boundless thought  
     Strive through the centuries and are slowly brought  
 Back to the source whence their divergence wakes.

The source that none have traced, since none can know  
Whether from Heaven the eternal waters well  
Through Nature's matted locks, as Ganges fell,  
Or from some dismal nether darkness flow.

Two genii in the dubious heart of man,  
Two great unhappy foes together bound  
Wrestle and strive to win unhampered ground;  
They strive for ever since the race began.

One from his body like a bridge of fire  
Mounts upward azure-winged with eager eyes;  
One in his brain deep-mansioned labouring lies  
And clamps to earth the spirit's high desire.

Here in this moonlight with strange visions rife  
I seem to see their vast peripheries  
Without me in the sombre mighty trees,  
And, hark! their silence turns the wheels of life.

These are the middle and the first. Are they  
The last too? Has the duel then no close?  
Shall neither vanquish of the eternal foes,  
Nor even at length this moonlight turn to day?

Our age has made an idol of the brain, .  
The last adored a purer presence; yet  
In Asia like a dove immaculate  
He lurks deep-brooding in the hearts of men.

But Europe comes to us bright-eyed and shrill.  
"A far delusion was that mounting fire,  
An impulse balked and an unjust desire;  
It fades as we ascend the human hill."



She cries to us to labour in the light  
 Of common things, grow beautiful and wise  
 On strong material food, nor vex our eyes  
 With straining after visionary delight.

Ah, beautiful and wise, but to what end?  
 Europe knows not, nor any of her schools  
 Who scorn the higher thought for dreams of fools;  
 Riches and joy and power meanwhile are gained.

Gained and then lost! For Death the heavy grip  
 Shall loosen, Death shall cloud the laughing eye,  
 And he who broke the nations soon shall lie  
 More helpless than a little child asleep.

And after? Nay, for death is end and term.  
 A fiery dragon through the centuries curled,  
 He feeds upon the glories of the world  
 And the vast mammoth dies before the worm.

Stars run their cycle and are quenched; the suns  
 Born from the night are to the night returned,  
 When the cold tenebrous spaces have inurned  
 The listless phantoms of the Shining Ones.

From two dead worlds a burning world arose  
 Of which the late putrescent fruit is man;  
 From chill dark space his roll of life began  
 And shall again in icy quiet close.

Our lives are but a transitory breath:  
 Mean pismires in the sad and dying age  
 Of a once glorious planet, on the edge  
 Of bitter pain we wait eternal death.

Watering the ages with our sweat and blood  
We pant towards some vague ideal state  
And by the effort fiercer ills create,  
Working by lasting evil transient good.

Insults and servitude we bear perforce;  
With profitable crimes our souls we rack,  
Vexing ourselves lest earth our seed should lack  
Who needs us not in her perpetual course;

Then down into the earth descend and sleep  
For ever, and the lives for which we toiled  
Forget us, who when they their turn have moiled,  
Themselves forgotten into silence creep.

Why is it all, the labour and the din,  
And wherefore do we plague our souls and vex  
Our bodies or with doubts our days perplex?  
Death levels soon the virtue with the sin.

If Death be end and close the useless strife,  
Strive not at all, but take what ease you may  
And make a golden glory of the day,  
Exhaust the little honey of your life.

Fear not to take her beauty to your heart  
Whom you so utterly desire; you do  
No hurt to any, for the inner you  
So cherished is a dream that shall depart.

The wine of life is sweet; let no man stint  
His longing or refuse one passionate hope.  
Why should we cabin in such infinite scope,  
Restrict the issue of such golden mint?

Society forbids? It for our sakes  
 Was fashioned; if it seek to fence around  
 Our joys and pleasures in such narrow bound,  
 It gives us little for the much it takes.

Nor need we hearken to the gospel vain  
 That bids men curb themselves to help mankind.  
 We lose our little chance of bliss, then blind  
 And silent lie for ever. Whose the gain?

What helps it us if so mankind be served?  
 Ourselves are blotted out from joy and light,  
 Having no profit of the sunshine bright,  
 While others reap the fruit our toils deserved.

O this new god who has replaced the old!  
 He dies to-day, he dies to-morrow, dies  
 At last for ever, and the last sunrise  
 Shall have forgotten him extinct and cold.

But virtue to itself is joy enough?  
 Yet if to us sin taste diviner? why  
 Should we not herd in Epicurus' sty  
 Whom Nature made not of a Stoic stuff?

For Nature being all, desire must reign.  
 It is too sweet and strong for us to slay  
 Upon a nameless altar, saying nay  
 To honied urgings for no purpose plain.

A strange unreal gospel Science brings,—  
 Being animals to act as angels might;  
 Mortals we must put forth immortal might  
 And flutter in the void celestial wings.

"Ephemeral creatures, for the future live,"  
 She bids us, "gather in for unborn men

Knowledge and joy, and forfeit, nor complain,  
The present which alone is yours to give."

Man's immortality she first denies

And then assumes what she rejects, made blind  
By sudden knowledge, the majestic Mind  
Within her smiling at her sophistries.

Not so shall Truth extend her flight sublime,  
Pass from the poor beginnings she has made  
And with the splendour of her wings displayed  
Range through the boundaries of Space and Time.

Clamp her not down to her material finds!  
She shall go further. She shall not reject  
The light within, nor shall the dialect  
Of unprogressive pedants bar men's minds.

We seek the Truth and will not pause nor fear.  
Truth we will have and not the sophist's pleas;  
Animals, we will take our grosser ease,  
Or, spirits, heaven's celestial music hear.

The intellect is not all; a guide within  
Awaits our question. He it was informed  
The reason, He surpasses; and unformed  
Presages of His mightiness begin.

Nor mind submerged, nor self subliminal,  
But the great Force that makes the planets wheel  
Through ether and the sun in flames reveal  
His godhead, is in us perpetual.

That Force in us is body, that is mind,  
And what is higher than the mind is He.  
This was the secret Science could not see;  
Aware of death, to life her eyes were blind.

Through chemistry she seeks the source of life,  
 Nor knows the mighty laws that she has found,  
 Are Nature's bye-laws merely, meant to ground  
 A grandiose freedom building peace by strife.

The organ for the thing itself she takes,  
 The brain for mind, the body for the soul,  
 Nor has she patience to explore the whole,  
 But like a child a hasty period makes.

"It is enough," she says, "I have explored  
 The whole of being; nothing now remains  
 But to put details in and count my gains."  
 So she deceives herself, denies her Lord.

Therefore He manifests Himself; once more  
 The wonders of the secret world within  
 Wrapped yet with an uncertain mist begin  
 To look from that thick curtain out; the door

Opens. Her days are numbered, and not long  
 Shall she be suffered to belittle thus  
 Man and restrain from his tempestuous  
 Uprising that immortal spirit strong.

He rises now; for God has taken birth.  
 The revolutions that pervade the world  
 Are faint beginnings and the discus hurled  
 Of Vishnu speeds down to enring the earth.

The old shall perish; it shall pass away,  
 Expunged, annihilated, blotted out;  
 And all the iron bands that ring about  
 Man's wide expansion shall at last give way.

Freedom, God, Immortality; the three  
 Are one and shall be realised at length,

Love, Wisdom, Justice, Joy and utter Strength  
Gather into a pure felicity.

It comes at last, the day foreseen of old,  
What John in Patmos saw, what Shelley dreamed,  
Vision and vain imagination deemed,  
The City of Delight, the Age of Gold.

The Iron Age is ended. Only now  
The last fierce spasm of the dying past  
Shall shake the nations, and when that has passed,  
Earth washed of ills shall raise a fairer brow.

This is man's progress; for the Iron Age  
Prepares the Age of Gold. What we call sin,  
Is but man's leavings as from deep within  
The Pilot guides him in his pilgrimage.

He leaves behind the ill with strife and pain,  
Because it clings and constantly returns,  
And in the fire of suffering fiercely burns  
More sweetness to deserve, more strength to gain.

He rises to the good with Titan wings:  
And this the reason of his high unease,  
Because he came from the infinities  
To build immortally with mortal things;

The body with increasing soul to fill,  
Extend Heaven's claim upon the toiling earth  
And climb from death to a diviner birth  
Grasped and supported by immortal Will.

# **PERSEUS THE DELIVERER**

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*A DRAMA*





## THE LEGEND OF PERSEUS

ACRISIUS, the Argive king, warned by an oracle that his daughter's son would be the agent of his death, hoped to escape his doom by shutting her up in a brazen tower. But Zeus, the King of the Gods, descended into her prison in a shower of gold and Danaë bore to him a son named Perseus. Danaë and her child were exposed in a boat without sail or oar on the sea, but here too fate and the gods intervened and, guided by a divine protection, the boat bore her safely to the Island of Seriphos. There Danaë was received and honoured by the King. When Perseus had grown to manhood the King, wishing to marry Danaë, decided to send him to his death and to that end ordered him to slay the Gorgon Medusa in the wild, unknown and snowy North and bring to him her head the sight of which turned men to stone. Perseus, aided by Athene, the Goddess of Wisdom, who gave him the divine sword Herpe, winged shoes to bear him through the air, her shield or ægis and the cap of invisibility, succeeded in his quest after many adventures. In his returning he came to Syria and found Andromeda, daughter of Cepheus and Cassiopea, King and Queen of Syria, chained to the rocks by the people to be devoured by a sea-monster as an atonement for her mother's impiety against the sea-god, Poseidon. Perseus slew the monster and rescued and wedded Andromeda.

In this piece the ancient legend has been divested of its original character of a heroic myth; it is made the nucleus round which there could grow the scenes of a romantic story of human temperament and life-impulses on the Elizabethan model. The country in which the action is located is a Syria of romance, not of history. Indeed a Hellenic legend could not at all be set in the environments of the life of a Semitic people and its early Aramæan civilisation: the town of Cepheus must be looked at as a Greek colony with a blonde Achæan dynasty ruling a Hellenised people who worship an old Mediterranean deity under a Greek name. In a romantic work of imagination of this type these outrages on history do not matter. Time there is more than Einsteinian in its relativity, the creative imagination is its sole disposer and arranger; fantasy reigns sovereign; the names of ancient countries and peoples are brought in only as fringes of a decorative background; anachronisms romp in wherever they can get an easy admittance, ideas and associations from all climes and epochs

minge; myth, romance and realism make up a single whole. For here the stage is the human mind of all times: the subject is an incident in its passage from a semi-primitive temperament surviving in a fairly advanced outward civilisation to a brighter intellectualism and humanism—never quite safe against the resurgence of the dark or violent life-forces which are always there subdued or subordinated or somnolent in the make-up of civilised man—and the first promptings of the deeper and higher psychic and spiritual being which it is his ultimate destiny to become.

## PERSONS OF THE DRAMA

PALLAS ATHENE.

POSEIDON.

PERSEUS, son of Zeus and Danaë.

CEPHEUS, King of Syria.

IOLAUS, son of Cepheus and Cassiopea.

POLYDAON, priest of Poseidon.

PHINEUS, King of Tyre.

TYRNAUS, }  
SMERDAS, } Merchants of Babylonia, wrecked on the coast of Syria.

THEROPS, a popular leader.

PERISSUS, a citizen butcher.

DERCETES, a Syrian captain.

NEBASSAR, captain of the Chaldean Guard.

CHABRIAS, }  
DAMOETES, }  
MEGAS, } townsmen and villagers.  
GARDAS, }  
MORUS, }  
SYRAX, }

CIREAS, a servant in the temple of Poseidon.

MEDES, an usher in the palace.

CASSIOPEA, princess of Chaldea, Queen of Syria.

ANDROMEDA, daughter of Cepheus and Cassiopea.

CYDONE, mistress of Iolaus.

PRAXILLA, head of the palace household in the women's apartments.

DIOMEDE, a slave-girl, servant and playmate of Andromeda.

BALTIS, }  
PASITHEA, } Syrian women.

SCENE.—*The city of Cepheus, the seashore, the temple of Poseidon on the headland and the surrounding country.*



## PROLOGUE

*The Ocean in tumult, and the sky in storm: Pallas  
Athene appears in the heavens with lightnings playing over her  
head and under her feet.*

ATHENE

Error of waters rustling through the world,  
Vast Ocean, call thy ravenous waves that march  
With blue fierce nostrils quivering for prey,  
Back to thy feet. Hush thy impatient surges  
At my divine command and do my will.

VOICES OF THE SEA

Who art thou layest thy serene command  
Upon the untamed waters?

ATHENE

I am Pallas,  
Daughter of the Omnipotent.

VOICES

What wouldst thou?  
For we cannot resist thee; our clamorous hearts  
Are hushed in terror at thy marble feet.

ATHENE

Awake your dread Poseidon. Bid him rise  
And come before me.

VOICES

Let thy compelling voice  
Awake him: for the sea is hushed.

ATHENE

Arise,  
Illimitable Poseidon! let thy blue  
And streaming tresses mingle with the foam

Emerging into light.

*Poseidon appears upon the waters.*

POSEIDON

What quiet voice  
Compels me from my rocky pillow piled  
Upon the floor of the enormous deep?

VOICES

A whiteness and a strength is in the skies.

POSEIDON

How art thou white and beautiful and calm,  
Yet clothed in tumult! Heaven above thee shakes  
Wounded with lightnings, goddess, and the sea  
Flees from thy dreadful tranquil feet. Thy calm  
Troubles me: who art thou, dweller in the light?

ATHENE

I am Athene.

POSEIDON

Virgin formidable

In beauty, disturber of the ancient world!  
Ever thou seekest to enslave to man  
The eternal Universe, and our huge motions  
That shake the mountains and upheave the seas  
Wouldst with the glancing visions of thy brain  
Coerce and bridle.

ATHENE

Me the Omnipotent  
Made from His being to lead and discipline  
The immortal spirit of man, till it attain  
To order and magnificent mastery  
Of all his outward world.

POSEIDON

What wouldst thou of me?

## ATHENE

The powers of the earth have kissed my feet  
In deep submission, and they yield me tribute,  
Olives and corn and all fruit-bearing trees,  
And silver from the bowels of the hills,  
Marble and iron ore. Fire is my servant.  
But thou, Poseidon, with thy kindred gods  
And the wild wings of air resist me. I come  
To set my feet upon thy azure locks,  
O shaker of the cliffs. Adore thy sovereign.

## POSEIDON

The anarchy of the enormous seas  
Is mine, O terrible Athene: I sway  
Their billows with my nod. Man's feeble feet  
Leave there no traces, nor his destiny  
Has any hold upon the shifting waves.

## ATHENE

Thou severest him with thy unmeasured wastes  
Whom I would weld in one. But I will lead him  
Over thy waters, thou wild thunderer,  
Spurning thy tops in hollowed fragile trees.  
He shall be confident in me and dare  
The immeasurable oceans till the West  
Mingles with India, and reach the northern isles  
That dwell beneath my dancing ægis bright,  
Snow-weary. He shall, armed with clamorous fire,  
Rush o'er the angry waters when the whale  
Is stunned between two waves and slay his foe  
Betwixt the thunders. Therefore I bid thee not,  
O azure strong Poseidon, to abate  
Thy savage tumults: rather his march oppose.  
For through the shocks of difficulty and death  
Man shall attain his godhead.

POSEIDON

What then desir'st thou,

Athene?

ATHENE

On yonder inhospitable coast  
Far-venturing merchants from the East, or those  
Who put from Tyre towards Atlantic gains,  
Are by thy trident fiercely shaken forth  
Upon the jagged rocks, and who escape,  
The gay and savage Syrians on their altars  
Massacre hideously, thee to propitiate,  
Moloch-Poseidon of the Syrian coasts,  
Dagon of Gaza, lord of many names  
And many natures, many forms of power  
Who rulest from Philistia to the north,  
A terror and a woe. O iron King,  
Desist from blood, be glad of kindlier gifts  
And suffer men to live.

POSEIDON

Behold, Athene,

My waters! see them lift their foam-white tops  
Charging from sky to sky in rapid tumult:  
Admire their force, admire their thunderous speed.  
With green hooves and white manes they trample onwards.  
My mighty voices fill the world, Athene.  
Shall I permit the grand anarchic seas  
To be a road and the imperious Ocean  
A means of merchandise? Shall the frail keels  
Of thy ephemeral mortals score its back  
With servile furrows and petty souls of men  
Triumphing tame the illimitable sea?  
I am not of the mild and later gods,  
But of that elder world; Lemuria



And old Atlantis raised me crimson altars,  
And my huge nostrils keep that scent of blood  
For which they quiver. Return into thy heavens,  
Pallas Athene, I into my deep.

ATHENE

Dash then thy billows up against my ægis  
In battle! think not to hide in thy deep oceans;  
For I will drive thy waters from the world  
And leave thee naked to the light.

POSEIDON

Dread virgin!

I will not war with thee, armipotent.

ATHENE

Then send thy champion forth to meet my champion,  
And let their conflict govern ours, Poseidon.

POSEIDON

Who is thy champion?

ATHENE

Perseus, the Olympian's son,  
Whom Danaë in her strong brazen tower,  
Acrisius' daughter, bore, by heavenly gold  
Lapped into slumber: for of that shining rain  
He is the beautiful offspring.

POSEIDON

The parricide

That is to be? But my sea-monster's fangs  
And fiery breathings shall prevent that murder.  
Farewell, Athene.

ATHENE

Farewell, until I press  
My feet upon thy blue enormous mane  
And add thy Ocean to my growing empire.

*Poseidon disappears into the sea.*

He dives into the deep and with a din  
The thunderous divided waters meet  
Above his grisly head. Thou wingest, Perseus,  
From northern snows to this fair sunny land,  
Not knowing in the night what way thou wendest;  
But the dawn comes and over earth's far rim  
The round sun rises, as thyself shalt rise  
On Syria and thy rosy Andromeda,  
A thing of light. Rejoice, thou famous hero!  
Be glad of love, be glad of life, whose bosom  
Harbours the quiet strength of pure Athene.

*She disappears into light.*

## ACT I

### SCENE 1

*A rocky and surf-beat margin of land walled in with great frowning cliffs.*

*Cireas, Diomedes.*

*Cir.* Diomedes? You here so early and in this wild wanton weather!

*Diom.* I can find no fault in the weather, Cireas; it is brilliant and frolicsome.

*Cir.* The rain has wept itself out and the sun has ventured into the open; but the wind is shouting like mad and the sea is still in a mighty passion. Has your mistress Andromeda sent you then with matin-offerings to Poseidon, or are you walking here to whip the red roses in your cheeks redder with the sea-wind?

*Diom.* My mistress cares as much for your Poseidon as I for your glum beetle-browed priest Polydaon. But you, Cireas? are you walking here to whip the red nose of you redder with the sea-wind or to soothe with them the marks of his holiness's cudgel?

*Cir.* I must carry up these buckets of sea-water to swab down the blue-haired old fellow in the temple. Hang the robustious storm-shaken curmudgeon! I have rubbed him and scrubbed him and bathed him and swathed him for these eighteen years, yet he never sent me one profitable piece of wreckage out of his sea yet. A gold bracelet, now, crusted with jewels, dropped from the arm of some drowned princess, or a sealed casket velvet-lined with a priceless vase carried by the Rhodian merchants: that would not

have beggared him! And I with so little could have bought my liberty.

*Diom.* May be 'twas that he feared. For who would wish to lose such an expert body-servant as you, my Cireas?

*Cir.* Zeus! if I thought that, I would leave his unwashed back to itch for a fortnight. But these Gods are kittle cattle to joke with. They have too many spare monsters about in their stables trained to snap up offenders for a light breakfast.

*Diom.* And how prosper the sacrifices, Cireas? I hope you keep your god soothingly and daintily fed in this hot summer season?

*Cir.* Alack, poor old Poseidon! He has had nothing but goats and sea-urchins lately, and that is poor food for a palate inured to *homme à la Phénicienne*, Diomedes. It is his own fault, he should provide wreckage more freely. But black Polydaon's forehead grows blacker every day: he will soon be as mad as Cybele's bull on the headland. I am every moment in terror of finding myself tumbled on the altar for a shipwrecked Phœnician and old blackbrows hacking about in search of my heart with his holy carving-tools.

*Diom.* You should warn him beforehand that your heart is in your paunch hidden under twenty pounds of fat: so shall he have less cutting-exercise and you an easier exit.

*Cir.* Out! would you have me slit for a water-god's dinner? Is this your tenderness for me?

*Diom.* Heaven forbid, dear Cireas. Syria would lose half her scampishness if you departed untimely to a worse world.

*Cir.* Away from here, you long sauciness, you thin edge of naughty satire. But, no! First tell me, what news of the palace? They say King Phineus will wed the Princess Andromeda.

*Diom.* Yes, but not till the Princess Andromeda weds King Phineus. What noise is that?

*Cir.* It was the cry of many men in anguish.  
*He climbs up a rock.*

*Diom.* Zeus, what a wail was there! surely a royal  
Huge ship from Sidon or the Nile has kissed  
Our ragged beaches.

*Cir.* A Phœnician galley  
Is caught and spinning in the surf, the men  
Urge desperate oars in vain. Hark, with a crash  
She rushes on the boulders' iron fangs  
That rip her tender sides. How the white ship  
Battered against them by the growling surf  
Screams like a woman tortured! From all sides  
The men are shaken out, as rattling peas  
Leap from a long and bursting sheath: these sink  
Gurgling into the billows, those are pressed  
And mangled on the jagged rocks.

*Diom.* O it must be  
A memorable sight! help me up, Cireas.

*Cir.* No, no, for I must run and tell old blackbrows  
That here's fresh meat for hungry grim Poseidon.

*He climbs down and out running.*  
*Diom.* You disobliging dog! This is the first wreck in  
eighteen months and I not to see it! I will try and climb  
round the rock even if my neck and legs pay the forfeit.

*She goes out in the opposite direction.*

## SCENE 2

### *The Same*

*Perseus descends on winged sandals from the clouds.*

*Pers.*     Rocks on the outland jagged with the sea,  
          You slumbering promontories whose huge backs  
          Jut into azure, and thou, O many-thundered  
          Enormous Ocean, hail! Whatever lands  
          Are ramparted with these forbidding shores,  
          Yet if you hold felicitous roofs of men,  
          Homes of delightful laughter, if you have streams  
          Where chattering girls dip in their pitchers cool  
          And dabble their white feet in the chill lapse  
          Of waters, trees and a green-mantled earth,  
          Cicales noisy in a million boughs  
          Or happy cheep of common birds, I greet you,  
          Syria or Egypt or Ionian shores,  
          Perseus the son of Danaë, who long  
          Have sojourned only with the hail-thrashed isles  
          Wet with cold mists and by the boreal winds  
          Snow-swathed. The angry voices of the surf  
          Are welcome to me whose ears have long been sealed  
          By rigorous silence in the snows. O even  
          The wail of mortal misery I choose  
          Rather than that intolerable hush;  
          For this at least is human. Thee I praise,  
          O mother Earth and thy guardian Sea, O Sun  
          Of the warm south nursing fair life of men.

I will go down into bee-murmuring fields  
And mix with men and women in the corn  
And eat again accustomed food. But first  
This galley shattered on the sharp-toothed rocks  
I fly to succour. You are grown dear to me,  
You smiling weeping human faces, brightly  
Who move, who live, not like those stony masks  
And Gorgon visions of that monstrous world  
Beyond the snows. I would not lose you now  
In the dead surges of the inhuman flood.

*He descends out of sight.*

*Iolaus enters with Cireas, Dercetes and soldiers.*

*Iol.* Prepare your ambush, men, amid these boulders,  
But at the signal, leave your rocky lairs  
With level bristling points and gyre them in.

*Cir.* O Poseidon Ennosigaios, man-swallower, earth-shaker, I have swabbed thee for eighteen years. I pray thee tot up the price of those swabbings and be not dishonest with me nor miserly. Eighteen by three hundred and sixty-five by two, that is the sum of them: and forget not the leap years either, O great Poseidon.

*Iol.* Into our ambush, for I hear them come.

*They conceal themselves. Perseus returns with Tyrnaus and Smerdas.*

*Pers.* Chaldean merchants, would my speed to save  
Had matched the hawk's when he swoops down for  
slaughter.

So many beautiful bodies of strong men  
Lost in the surge, so many eager hopes  
Of happiness now quenched would still have gladdened  
The sunlight. Yet for two delightful lives  
Saved to the stir and motion of the world  
I praise the Gods that help us.

*Tyr.* Thou radiant youth  
Whose face is like a joyous god's for beauty,

- Whatever worth the body's life may have,  
 I thank thee that 'tis saved. Smerdas, discharge  
 That hapless humour from thy lids! If riches  
 Are lost, the body, thy strong instrument  
 To gather riches, is not lost, nor mind,  
 The provident director of its labours.
- Smer.* Three thousand pieces of that wealthy stuff,  
 Full forty chests all crammed with noble gems,  
 All lost, all in a moment lost! We are beggars.
- Tyr.* Smerdas, not beggared yet of arm or brain.
- Smer.* The toil-marred peasant has as much.
- Pers.* Merchant,  
 I sorrow for thy loss: all beautiful things  
 Were meant to shine in the bright day, and grievous  
 It is to know the senseless billows play with them.  
 Yet life, most beautiful of all, is left thee.  
 Is not mere sunlight something, and to breathe  
 A joy? Be patient with the gods; they love not  
 Rebellion and o'ertake it with fresh scourgings.
- Smer.* O that the sea had swallowed me and rolled  
 In my dear treasure! Tell me, Syrian youth,  
 Are there not divers in these parts, could pluck  
 My wealth from the abyss?
- Pers.* Chaldean merchant,  
 I am not of this country, but like thyself  
 Hear first today the surf roar on its beaches.
- Smer.* Cursed be the moment when we neared its shores!  
 O harsh sea-god, if thou wilt have my wealth,  
 My soul, it was a cruel mercy then to leave  
 This beggared empty body bared of all  
 That made life sweet. Take this too, and everything.
- Iol.* (*stepping forward*)  
 Thy prayer is granted thee, O Babylonian.  
*The soldiers appear and surround Perseus and the merchants.*



*Cir.* All the good stuff drowned! O unlucky Cireas!  
O greedy Poseidon!

*Smer.* Shield us! what are these threatening spear-points?  
*Tyr.* Fate's.

This is that strange inhospitable coast  
Where the wrecked traveller in his own warm blood  
Is given guest-bath. (*draws*) Death's dice are yet to  
throw.

*Iol.* Draw not in vain, strive not against the gods.  
This is the shore near the temple where Poseidon  
Sits ivory-limbed in his dim rock-hewn house  
And nods above the bleeding mariner  
His sapphire locks in gloom. You three are come,  
A welcome offering to that long dry altar,  
O happy voyagers. Your road is straight  
To Elysium.

*Pers.* An evil and harsh religion  
You practise in your land, stripling of Syria,  
Yet since it is religion, do thy will,  
If thou have power no less than will. And yet  
I deem that ere I visit death's calm country,  
I have far longer ways to tread.

*Tyr.* (*flinging away his sword*)

Take me.  
I will not please the gods with impotent writhing  
Under the harrow of my fate.

*They seize Tyrnaus.*

*Smer.* O wicked fool!  
You might have saved me with that sword. Ah youth!  
Ah radiant stranger! help me! thou art mighty.

*Pers.* Still, merchant, thou wouldst live?

*Smer.* I am dead with terror  
Of these bright thirsty spears. O they will carve  
My frantic heart out of my living bosom

To throw it bleeding on that hideous altar.  
Save me, hero!

*Pers.* I war not with the gods for thee.  
From belching fire or the deep-mouthed abyss  
Of waters to have saved the meanest thing  
That wears man's kindly semblance, is a joy.  
But he is mad who for another's ease  
Incurs the implacable pursuit of heaven.  
Yet since each man on earth has privilege  
To battle even against the gods for life,  
Sweet life, lift up from earth thy fellow's sword;  
I will protect meanwhile thy head from onset.

*Smer.* Alas, you mock me! I have no skill with weapons  
Nor am a fighter. Save me!

*The Syrians seize Smerdas.*

Help! I will give thee  
The wealth of Babylon when I am safe.

*Pers.* My sword is heaven's; it is not to be purchased.

*Smerdas and Tyrnaus are led away.*

*Iol.* Take too this radiance.

*Pers.* (*drawing his sword*)

*Asian stripling, pause.*

I am not weak of hand nor feeble of heart.  
Thou art too young, too blithe, too beautiful;  
I would not disarrange thy sunny curls  
By any harsher touch than an embrace.

*Iol.* I too could wish to spare thy joyous body  
From the black knife, whoe'er thou art, O stranger.  
But grim compulsion drives and angry will  
Of the sea's lord, chafing that mortal men  
Insult with their frail keels his rude strong oceans.  
Therefore he built his grisly temple here,  
And all who are broken in the unequal war  
With surge and tempest, though they evade his rocks,

Must belch out anguished blood upon that altar  
Miserably.

*Pers.* I come not from the Ocean.

*Iol.* There is no other way that men could come;  
For this is ground forbidden to unknown feet.  
(*smiling*)

Unless these gaudy pinions on thy shoes  
Were wings indeed to bear thee through the void!

*Pers.* Are there not those who ask nor solid land  
For footing nor the salt flood to buoy their motions?  
Perhaps I am of these.

*Iol.* Of these thou art not.  
The gods are sombre, terrible to gaze at,  
Or, even if bright, remote, grand, formidable.  
But thou art open and fair like our blue heavens  
In Syria and thy radiant masculine body  
Allures the eye. Yield! it may be the God  
Will spare thee.

*Pers.* Set on thy war-dogs. Me alive  
If they alive can take, I am content  
To bleed a victim.

*Iol.* Art thou a demigod  
To beat back with one blade a hundred spears?

*Pers.* My sword is in my hand and that shall answer.  
I am tired of words.

*Iol.* Dercetes, wait. His face  
Is beautiful as Heaven. O dark Poseidon,  
What wilt thou do with him in thy dank caves  
Under the grey abysms of the salt flood?  
Spare him to me and sunlight.

*Polydaon and Phineus enter from behind.*

*Derc.* Prince, give the order.

*Iol.* Let this young sungod live.

*Derc.* It is forbidden.

*Iol.* But I allow it.

*Poly.* (*coming forward*)

And when did lenient Heaven  
Make thee a godhead, Syrian Iolaus,  
To set thy proud decree against Poseidon's?  
Wilt thou rescind what Ocean's Zeus has ordered?

*Iol.* Polydaon—

*Poly.* Does a royal name on earth  
Inflate so foolishly thy mortal pride,  
Thou evenest thyself with the Olympians?  
Beware, the blood of kings has dropped ere now  
From the grey sacrificial knife.

*Iol.* Our blood!  
Thou darest threaten me, presumptuous priest?  
Back to thy blood-stained kennel! I absolve  
This stranger.

*Poly.* Captain, take them both. You flinch?  
Are you so fearful of the name of prince  
He plays with? Fear rather dark Poseidon's anger.

*Phin.* Be wise, young Iolaus. Polydaon,  
Thy zeal outstrips the reverence due to kings.

*Iol.* I need not thy protection, Tyrian Phineus:  
This is my country.

*He draws.*

*Phin.* (*aside to Polydaon*)

It were well done to kill him now, his sword  
Being out against the people's gods; for then  
Who blames the god's avenger?

*Poly.* Will you accept,  
Syrians, the burden of his sacrilege?  
Upon them for Poseidon!

*Derc.* Seize them but slay not!  
Let none dare shed the blood of Syria's kings.

*Soldiers* Poseidon! great Poseidon.

*Pers.* Iolaus,  
Rein in thy sword: I am enough for these.

*He shakes his uncovered shield in the faces of the soldiers:  
they stagger back covering their eyes.*

*Iol.* Gods, what a glory lights up Syria!

*Poly.* Amazement!

Is this a god opposes us? Back, back!

*Cir.* Master, master, skedaddle: run, run, good King of Tyre, it is scuttle or be scuttled. Zeus has come down to earth with feathered shoes and a shield made out of phosphorus.

*He runs off, followed more slowly by Dercetes and the soldiers.*

*Phin.* Whate'er thou art, yet thou shalt not outface me.

*He advances with sword drawn.*

Hast thou Heaven's thunders with thee too?

*Poly. (pulling him back)*

Back, Phineus!

The fiery-tasselled ægis of Athene  
Shakes forth these lightnings, and an earthly sword  
Were madness here.

*He goes out with Phineus.*

*Iol.* O radiant strong immortal,

Iolaus kneels to thee.

*Pers.* No, Iolaus.

Though great Athene breathes Olympian strength  
Into my arm sometimes, I am no more  
Than a brief mortal.

*Iol.* Art thou only man?

O then be Iolaus' friend and lover,  
Who com'st to me like something all my own  
Destined from other shores.

*Pers.* Give me thy hands,

O fair young child of the warm Syrian sun.  
Embrace me! Thou art like a springing laurel  
Fed upon sunlight by the murmuring waters.

*Iol.* Tell me thy name. What memorable earth  
Gave thee to the azure?

- Pers.* I am from Argolis,  
Perseus my name, the son of Danaë.
- Iol.* Come, Perseus, friend, with me: fierce entertainment  
We have given, unworthy the fair joyousness  
Thou carriest like a flag, but thou shalt meet  
A kinder Syria. My royal father Cepheus  
Shall welcome, my mother give thee a mother's greeting  
And our Andromeda's delightful smile  
Persuade thee of a world more full of beauty  
Than thou hadst dreamed of.
- Pers.* I shall yet be glad with thee,  
O Iolaus, in thy father's halls,  
But I would not as yet be known in Syria.  
Is there no pleasant hamlet near, hedged in  
With orchard walls and green with unripe corn  
And washed with bright and flitting waves, where I  
Can harbour with the kindly village folk  
And wake to cock-crow in the morning hours,  
As in my dear Seriphos?
- Iol.* Such a village  
Lurks near our hills,—there with my kind Cydone  
Thou may'st abide at ease, until thou choose,  
O Perseus, to reveal thyself to Syria.  
I too can visit thee unquestioned.
- Pers.* Thither  
Then lead me. I have a thirst for calm obscurity  
And cottages and happy unambitious talk  
And simple people. With these I would have rest,  
Not in the laboured pomp of princely towns  
Amid pent noise and purple masks of hate.  
I will drink deep of pure humanity  
And take the innocent smell of rain-drenched earth,  
So shall I with a noble untainted mind  
Rise from the strengthening soil to great adventure.
- They go out.*

### SCENE 3

*The Palace of Cepheus. A room in the women's apartments.  
Praxilla, to her enters Diomedes.*

*Diom.* O Praxilla, Praxilla!

*Prax.* So, thou art back, thou tall inutility? Where wert thou lingering all this hour? I am tired of always whipping thee. I will hire thee out to a timber-merchant to carry logs from dawn to nightfall. Thou shalt learn what labour is.

*Diom.* Praxilla, O Praxilla! I am full to the throat with news. I pray you, rip me open.

*Prax.* Willingly.

*She advances towards her with an uplifted knife.*

*Diom. (escaping)*

A plague! can you not appreciate a fine metaphor when you hear it? I never saw so prosaic a mortal. The soul in you was born of a marriage between a saucepan and a broomstick.

*Prax.* Tell me your news. If it is good, I will excuse you your whipping.

*Diom.* I was out on the beach thinking to watch the seagulls flying and crying in the wind amidst the surf dashing and the black cliff-heads—

*Prax.* And could not Poseidon turn thee into a gull there among thy natural kindred? Thou wert better fitted with that shape than in a reasonable human body.

*Diom.* Oh then you shall hear the news tell itself, mistress, when the whole town has chewed it and rechewed it.

*She is going.*

*Prax.* Stop, you long-limbed impertinence. The news!

*Diom.* I'll be hanged if I tell you.

*Prax.* You shall be whipped, if you do not.

*Diom.* Well, your goddess Switch is a potent divinity. A ship with men from the East has broken on the headland below the temple and two Chaldeans are saved alive for the altar.

*Prax.* This is glorious news indeed.

*Diom.* It will be a great day when they are sacrificed!

*Prax.* We have not had such since the long galley from Cnossus grounded upon our shores and the temple was washed richly with blood and the altar blushed as thickly with hearts of victims as the King's throne with rubies. Poseidon was pleased that year and the harvest was so plentiful, men were brought in from beyond the hills to reap it.

*Diom.* There would have been a third victim, but Prince Iolaus drew sword on the priest Polydaon to defend him.

*Prax.* I hope this is not true.

*Diom.* I saw it.

*Prax.* Is the wild boy  
In love with ruin? Not the King himself  
Can help him if the grim sacrificant  
Demand his fair young head: only a god  
Could save him. And he was already in peril  
From Polydaon's gloomy hate!

*Diom.* And Phineus'.

*Prax.* Hush, silly madcap, hush; or speak much lower.

*Diom.* Here comes my little queen of love, stepping  
As daintily as a young bird in spring  
When he would take the hearts of all the forest.

*Andromeda enters.*

*Prax.* You have slept late, Andromeda.

*Andr.* Have I?

The sun had risen in my dreams: perhaps



I feared to wake lest I should find all dark  
Once more, Praxilla.

*Diom.* He has risen in your eyes,  
For they are full of sunshine, little princess.

*Andr.* I have dreamed, Diomede, I have dreamed.

*Diom.* What did you dream?

*Andr.* I dreamed my sun had risen.  
He had a face like the Olympian Zeus  
And wings upon his feet. He smiled upon me,  
Diomede.

*Prax.* Dreams are full of stranger fancies.  
Why, I myself have seen hooved bears, winged lions,  
And many other monsters in my dreams.

*Andr.* My sun was a bright god and bore a flaming sword  
To kill all monsters.

*Diom.* I think I've seen today  
Your sun, my little playmate.

*Andr.* No, you have not.  
I'll not have any eyes see him but mine:  
He is my own, my very own.

*Diom.* And yet  
I saw him on the wild sea-beach this morning.

*Prax.* What mean you, Diomede?

*Diom.* (to *Andromeda*)

You have not heard?  
A ship was flung upon the rocks this morning  
And all her human burden drowned.

*Andr.* Alas!

*Diom.* It was a marvellous sight, my little playmate,  
And made my blood with horror and admiration  
Run richer in my veins. The great ship groaned  
While the rough boulders dashed her into pieces,  
The men with desperate shrieks went tumbling down  
Mid laughter of the surge, strangled 'twixt billows  
Or torn by strips upon the savage rocks

That tossed their mangled bodies back again  
Into the cruel keeping of the surge.

*Andr.* O do not tell me any more! How had you heart  
To look at what I cannot bear to hear?  
For while you spoke, I felt as if the rocks  
Were tearing my own limbs and the salt surge  
Choking me.

*Diom.* I suppose it must have hurt them.  
Yes, it was pitiful. Still, 'twas a sight.  
Meanwhile the deep surf boomed their grandiose dirge  
With fierce triumphant voices. The whole scene  
Was like a wild stupendous sacrifice  
Offered by the grey-filleted grim surges  
On the gigantic altar of the rocks  
To the calm cliffs seated like gods above.

*Andr.* Alas, the unhappy men, the poor drowned men  
Who had young children somewhere whom they loved,  
How could you watch them die! Had I been a god,  
I would not let this cruel thing have happened.

*Diom.* Why do you weep for them? they were not Syrians.

*Prax.* Not they, but barbarous jabbering foreigners  
From Indus or Arabia. Fie my child,  
You sit upon the floor and weep for these?

*Andr.* When Iolaus fell upon the rocks  
And hurt himself, you did not then forbid me  
To weep!

*Prax.* He is your brother. That was loving,  
Tender and right.

*Andr.* And these men were not brothers?  
They too had sisters who will feel as I should  
If my dear brother were to die so wretchedly.

*Prax.* Let their own sisters weep for them: we have  
Enough of our own sorrows. You are young  
And softly made: because you have yourself  
No griefs, but only childhood's soon-dried tears,

You make a luxury of others' woe.  
So when we watch a piteous tragedy,  
We grace with real tears its painted sorrows.  
When you are older and have true things to weep for,  
Then you will understand.

*Andr.* I'll not be older!

I will not understand! I only know  
That men are heartless and your gods most cruel.  
I hate them!

*Prax.* Hush, Hush! You know not what you say,  
You must not speak such things. Come, Diomede,  
Tell her the rest.

*Andr.* (*covering her ears with her hands*)

I will not hear you.

*Diom.* (*kneeling by her and drawing her hands away*)

But I

Will tell you of your bright sungod.

*Andr.* He is not

My sungod or he would have saved them.

*Diom.* He did.

*Andr.* (*leaping to her feet*)

Then tell me of him.

*Diom.* Suddenly there dawned

A man, a vision, a brightness, who descended  
From where I know not, but to me it seemed  
That the blue heavens just then created him  
Out of the sunlight. His face and radiant body  
Aspired to copy the Olympian Zeus  
And wings were on his feet.

*Andr.* He was my sungod!

*Diom.* He caught two drowning wretches by the robe  
And drew them safe to land.

*Andr.* He was my sungod.

Diomede, I have seen him in my dream.

- Prax.* I think it was Poseidon come to take  
His tithe of all that death for the ancient altar,  
Lest all be engulfed by his grey billows, he  
Go quite unhonoured.
- Diom.* Hang up your grim Poseidon!  
This was a sweet and noble face all bright  
With manly kindness.
- Andr.* Oh I know, I know.  
Where went he with those rescued?
- Diom.* Why, just then  
Prince Iolaus and his band leaped forth  
And took them.
- Andr.* (*angrily*) Wherefore took them? By what right?
- Diom.* To die according to our Syrian law  
On dark Poseidon's altar.
- Andr.* They shall not die.  
It is a shame, a cruel cold injustice.  
I wonder that my brother had any part in it!  
My sungod saved them, they belong to him,  
Not to your hateful gods. They are his and mine,  
I will not let you kill them.
- Prax.* Why, they must die  
And you will see it done, my little princess,  
You shall! Where are you going?
- Andr.* Let me go.  
I do not love you when you talk like this.
- Prax.* But you are Syria's lady and must appear  
At these high ceremonies.
- Andr.* I had rather be  
A beggar's daughter who devours the remnants  
Rejected from your table, than reign a queen  
Doing such cruelty.
- Prax.* Little passionate scold!  
You mean not what you say. A beggar's daughter!

You? You who toss about if only a rose-leaf  
Crinkle the creamy smoothness of your sheets,  
And one harsh word flings weeping broken-hearted  
As if the world had no more joy in store.  
You are a little posturer, you make  
A theatre of your own mind to act in,  
Take parts, declaim such childish rhetoric  
As that you speak now. You a beggar's daughter!  
Come, listen what became of your bright sungod.  
*Diom.* Him too they would have seized, but he, with steel  
Opposed and tranquil smiling eyes appalled them.  
Then Polydaon came and Phineus came  
And bade arrest the brilliant god. Our Prince,  
Seized by his glory, with his virgin point  
Resisted their assault.

*Andr.*

My Iolaus!

*Diom.*

All suddenly the stranger's lifted shield  
Became a storm of lightnings. Dawn was blinded:  
Far promontories leaped out in the blaze,  
The surges were illumined and the horizon  
Answered with light.

*Andr.* (*clapping her hands*)

O glorious! O my dream!

*Prax.*

You tell the actions of a mighty god,  
Diomedes.

*Diom.*

A god he seemed to us, Praxilla.  
The soldiers ran in terror, Polydaon  
Went snorting off like a black whale harpooned,  
And even Phineus fled.

*Andr.*

Was he not killed?

I wish he had been killed.

*Prax.*

This is your pity!

*Andr.* (*angrily*)

I do not pity tigers, wolves and scorpions.  
I pity men who are weak and beasts that suffer.

*Prax.* I thought you loved all men and living things.

*Andr.* Perhaps I would have loved him like my hound  
Or the lion in the park who lets me pat his mane;  
But since he would have me even without my will  
To foul with his beast touch, my body abhors him.

*Prax.* Fie, fie! You speak too violently. How long  
Will you be such a child?

*Diom.* Our Iolaus  
And that bright stranger then embraced. Together  
They left the beach.

*Andr.* Where, where is Iolaus?  
Why is he long in coming? I must see him.  
I have a thousand things to ask.

*Diom.* *She runs out.*  
She is

*Prax.* A strange unusual child, my little playmate.  
None can help loving her, she is in charm  
Compelling: but her mind is wry and warped.  
She is not natural, not sound in fancy,  
But made of wild uncurbed imaginations,  
With feelings as unruly as winds and waves  
And morbid sympathies. At times she talks  
Strange childish blasphemies that make me tremble.  
She would impose her fancies on the world  
As better than the eternal laws that rule us!  
I wish her mother had brought her up more strictly.  
For she will come to harm.

*Diom.* Oh, do not say it!  
I have seen no child in all our Syria like her,  
None her bright equal in beauty. She pleases me  
Like days of sunlight rain when spring caresses  
Warmly the air. Oh, here is Iolaus.

*Prax.* Is it he?

*Diom.* I know him by the noble strut  
He has put on ever since they made him captain.

*Andromeda comes running.*

*Andr.* My brother comes! I saw him from the terrace.

*Enters Iolaus. Andromeda runs and embraces him.*

Oh, Iolaus, have you brought him to me?

Where is my sungod?

*Iol.* In heaven, little sister.

*Andr.* Oh, do not laugh at me. I want my sungod  
Whose face is like the grand Olympian Zeus'  
And wings are on his feet. Where did you leave him  
After you took him from our rough sea-beaches?

*Iol.* What do you mean, Andromeda?

*Diom.* Some power  
Divine sent her a dream of that bright strength  
Which shone by you on the sea-beach today,  
And him she calls her sungod.

*Iol.* Is it so?  
My little wind-tossed rose Andromeda!  
I shall be glad indeed if Heaven intends this.

*Andr.* Where is he?

*Iol.* Do you not know, little rose-sister,  
The great gods visit earth by splendid moments  
And then are lost to sight? Come, do not weep;  
He is not lost to Syria.

*Andr.* Iolaus,  
Why did you take the two poor foreign men  
And give them to the priest? My sungod saved them,  
Brother,—what right had you to kill?

*Iol.* My child,  
I only did my duty as a soldier,  
Yet grieve I was compelled.

*Andr.* Now will you save them?

*Iol.* But they belong to dread Poseidon now!

*Andr.* What will be done to them?

*Iol.* They must be bound  
On the god's altar and their living hearts

Ripped from their blood-choked breasts to feed his  
hunger.

*Andromeda covers her face with her robe.*

Grieve not for them: they but fulfil their fate.  
These things are in the order of the world  
Like plagues and slaughters, famines, fires and  
earthquakes,  
Which when they pass us by killing their thousands,  
We should not weep for, but be grateful only  
That other souls than the dear heads we loved  
Have perished.

*Andr.* You will not save them?  
*Prax.* Unhappy girl!

It is impiety to think of it.  
Fie! Would you have your brother killed for your  
whimsies?

*Andr.* Will you not save them, brother?  
*Iol.* I cannot, child.  
*Andr.* Then I will.

*She goes out.*

*Iol.* Does she mean it?  
*Prax.* Such wild caprices  
Are always darting through her brain.  
*Iol.* I could not take  
Poseidon's wrath upon my head!  
*Prax.* Forget it

As she will too. Her strange imaginations  
Flutter awhile among her golden curls,  
But soon wing off with careless flight to Lethe.

*Medes enters.*

*Iol.* What is it, Medes?  
*Med.* The King, Prince Iolaus,  
Requires your presence in his audience-chamber.  
*Iol.* So? Tell me, Medes, is Poseidon's priest  
In presence there?



*Med.* He is and full of wrath.

*Iol.* Go, tell them I am coming.

*Medes goes out.*

*Prax.* Alas!

*Iol.* Fear not.

I have a strength the grim intriguers dream not of.  
Let not my sister hear this, Diomede.

*He goes.*

*Prax.* What may not happen? The priest is dangerous,  
Poseidon may be angry. Let us go  
And guard our child from peril of this shock.

*They oo.*

## ACT II

### SCENE 1

*The audience-chamber in the Palace of Cepheus.  
Cepheus and Cassiopea, seated.*

- Cass.* What will you do, Cepheus?  
*Ceph.* This that has happened  
Is most unfortunate.
- Cass.* What will you do?  
I hope you will not give up to the priest  
My Iolaus' golden head? I hope  
You do not mean that?
- Ceph.* Great Poseidon's priest  
Sways all this land: for from the liberal blood  
Moistening that high-piled altar grow our harvests  
And strong Poseidon satisfied defends  
Our frontiers from the loud Assyrian menace.
- Cass.* Empty thy treasures, glut him with gold.  
Let us be beggars rather than one bright curl  
Of Iolaus feel his gloomy mischiefs.
- Ceph.* I had already thought of it. Medes!  
*Medes enters.*  
Waits Polydaon yet?
- Med.* He does, my lord.
- Ceph.* Call him and Tyrian Phineus.  
*Medes goes out again.*
- Cass.* Bid Tyre save  
Andromeda's loved brother from this doom;  
He shall not have our daughter otherwise.
- Ceph.* This too was in my mind already, queen.  
*Polydaon and Phineus enter.*

Be seated, King of Tyre: priest Polydaon,  
Possess thy usual chair.

*Poly.* Well, King of Syria,  
Shall I have justice? Wilt thou be the King  
Over a peopled country? or must I loose  
The snake-haired Gorgon-eyed Erinnyes  
To hunt thee with the clamorous whips of Hell  
Blood-dripping?

*Ceph.* Be content. Cepheus gives nought  
But justice from his mighty seat. Thou shalt  
Have justice.

*Poly.* I am not used to cool my heels  
About the doors of princes like some beggarly  
And negligible suitor whose poor plaint  
Is valued by some paltry drachmas. I am  
Poseidon's priest.

*Ceph.* The prince is called to answer here  
Thy charges.

*Poly.* Answer! Will he deny a crime  
Done impudently in Syria's face? 'Tis well;  
The Tyrian stands here who can meet that lie.

*Cass.* My children's lips were never stained with lies,  
Insulting priest, nor will be now; from him  
We shall have truth.

*Ceph.* And grant the charge admitted,  
The ransom shall be measured with the crime.

*Poly.* What talk is this of ransom? Think'st thou, King,  
That dire Poseidon's grim offended godhead  
Can be o'erplastered with a smudge of silver?  
Shall money blunt his vengeance? Shall his majesty  
Be estimated in a usurer's balance?  
Blood is the ransom of this sacrilege.

*Cass.* Ah God!

*Ceph. (in agitation)*

Take all my treasury includes

Of gold and silver, gems and porphyry  
Unvalued.

*Poly.* The gods are not to be bribed,  
King Cepheus.

*Cass. (apart)* Give him honours, state, precedence,  
All he can ask. O husband, let me keep  
My child's head on my bosom safe.

*Ceph.* Listen!  
What wouldst thou have? Precedence, pomp and state?  
Hundreds of spears to ring thee where thou walkest?  
Swart slaves and beautiful women in thy temple  
To serve thee and thy god? They are thine. In feasts  
And high processions and proud regal meetings  
Poseidon's followers shall precede the King.

*Poly.* Me wilt thou bribe? I take these for Poseidon,  
Nor waive my chief demand.

*Ceph.* What will content thee?

*Poly.* A victim has been snatched from holy altar:  
To fill that want a victim is demanded.

*Ceph.* I will make war on Egypt and Assyria  
And throw thee kings for victims.

*Poly.* Thy vaunt is empty.  
Poseidon being offended, who shall give thee  
Victory o'er Egypt and o'er strong Assyria?

*Ceph.* Take thou the noblest head in all the kingdom  
Below the Prince. Take many heads for one.

*Poly.* Shall then the innocent perish for the guilty?  
Is this thy justice? How shall thy kingdom last?

*Ceph.* You hear him, Cassiopea? he will not yield,  
He is inexorable.

*Poly.* Must I wait longer?

*Ceph.* Ho, Medes!

*Medes enters.*

Iolaus comes not yet.

*Medes goes out.*

*Cass. (rising fiercely)*

Priest, thou wilt have my child's blood then, it seems!  
Nought less will satisfy thee than thy prince  
For victim?

*Poly.* Poseidon knows not prince or beggar.

Whoever honours him, he heaps with state  
And fortune. Whoever wakes his dreadful wrath,  
He throws down into Erebus for ever.

*Cass.* Beware! Thou shalt not have my child. Take heed  
Ere thou drive monarchs to extremity.  
Thou hopest in thy sacerdotal pride  
To make the Kings of Syria childless, end  
A line that started from the gods. Think'st thou  
It will be tamely suffered? What have we  
To lose, if we lose this? I bid thee again  
Take heed: drive not a queen to strong despair.  
I am no tame-souled peasant, but a princess  
And great Chaldea's child.

*Poly. (after a pause)*

Wilt thou confirm  
Thy treasury and all the promised honours,  
If I excuse the deed?

*Ceph.*

They shall be thine.  
*He turns to whisper with Cassiopea.*

*Phin. (apart to Polydaon)*

Dost thou prefer me for thy foeman?

*Poly.*

See  
In the queen's eyes her rage. We must discover  
New means; this way's not safe.

*Phin.*

Thou art a coward, priest, for all thy violence.  
But fear me first and then blench from a woman.

*Poly.*

Well, as you choose.

*Iolaus enters.*

*Iol.*

Father, you sent for me?

*Ceph.*

There is a charge upon thee, Iolaus,

- I do not yet believe. But answer truth  
Like Cepheus' son, whatever the result.
- Iol.* Whatever I have done, my father, good  
Or ill, I dare support against the world.  
What is this accusation?
- Ceph.* Didst thou rescue  
At dawn a victim from Poseidon's altar?
- Iol.* I did not.
- Poly.* Dar'st thou deny it, wretched boy?  
Monarch, his coward lips have uttered falsehood.  
Speak, King of Tyre.
- Iol.* Hear me speak first. Thou ruffian  
Intriguer masking in a priest's disguise,—
- Poly.* Hear him, O King!
- Ceph.* Speak calmly. I forbid  
All violence. Thou deniest then the charge?
- Iol.* As it was worded to me, I deny it.
- Phin.* Syria, I have not spoken till this moment,  
And would not now, but sacred truth compels  
My tongue howe'er reluctant. I was there,  
And saw him rescue a wrecked mariner  
With his rash steel. Would that I had not seen it!
- Iol.* Thou liest, Phineus, King of Tyre.
- Cass.* Alas!  
If thou hast any pity for thy mother,  
Run not upon thy death in this fierce spirit,  
My child. Calmly repel the charge against thee,  
Nor thus offend thy brother.
- Phin.* I am not angry.
- Iol.* It was no shipwrecked weeping mariner,  
Condemned by the wild seas, whom they attempted,  
But a calm god or glorious hero who came  
By other ways than man's to Syria's margin.  
Nor did rash steel or battle rescue him.

With the mere dreadful waving of his shield  
He shook from him a hundred threatening lances,  
This hero hot from Tyre and this proud priest  
Now bold to bluster in his monarch's chamber,  
But then a pallid coward,—so he trusts  
In his Poseidon!

*Poly.* Hast thou done?

*Iol.* Not yet.

That I drew forth my sword, is true, and true  
I would have rescued him from god or devil  
Had it been needed.

*Poly.* Enough! he has confessed!

Give verdict, King, and sentence. Let me watch  
Thy justice.

*Ceph.* But this fault was not so deadly!

*Poly.* I see thy drift, O King. Thou wouldst prefer  
Thy son to him who rules the earth and waters:  
Thou wouldst exalt thy throne above the temple,  
Setting the gods beneath thy feet. Fool, fool,  
Know'st thou not that the terrible Poseidon  
Can end thy house in one tremendous hour?  
Yield him one impious head which cannot live  
And he will give thee other and better children.  
Give sentence or be mad and perish.

*Iol.* Father,

Not for thy son's but for thy honour's sake  
Resist him. 'Tis better to lose crown and life,  
Than rule the world because a priest allows it.

*Poly.* Give sentence, King. I can no longer wait,  
Give sentence.

*Ceph.* (*helplessly to Cassiopea*)

What shall I do?

*Cass.* Monarch of Tyre,

Thou chooseth silence then, a pleased spectator?  
Thou hast bethought thee of other nuptials?

- Phin.* *Lady,*  
 You wrong my silence which was but your servant  
 To find an issue from this dire impasse,  
 Rescuing your child from wrath, justice not wounded.
- Cass.* The issue lies in the accuser's will,  
 If putting malice by he'd only seek  
 Poseidon's glory.
- Phin.* The deed's by all admitted,  
 The law and bearing of it are in doubt.  
 (*To Polydaon*)  
 You urge a place is void and must be filled  
 On great Poseidon's altar, and demand  
 Justly the guilty head of Iolaus.  
 He did the fault, his head must ransom it.  
 Let him fill up the void, who made the void.  
 Nor will high heaven accept a guiltless head,  
 To let the impious free.
- Cass.* Phineus,—
- Phin.* But if  
 The victim lost return, you cannot then  
 Claim Iolaus: then there is no void  
 For substitution.
- Poly.* King,—
- Phin.* The simpler fault  
 With ransom can be easily excused  
 And covered up in gold. Let him produce  
 The fugitive.
- Iol.* Tyrian,—
- Phin.* I have not forgotten.  
 Patience! You plead that your mysterious guest  
 Being neither shipwrecked nor a mariner  
 Comes not within the doom of law. Why then,  
 Let Law decide that issue, not the sword  
 Nor swift evasion! Dost thou fear the event



Of thy great father's sentence from that throne  
Where Justice sits with bright unsullied robe  
Judging the peoples? Calmly expect his doom  
Which errs not.

*Cass.* Thou art a man noble indeed in counsel  
And fit to rule the nations.

*Ceph.* I approve.  
You laugh, my son?

*Iol.* I laugh to see wise men  
Catching their feet in their own subtleties.  
King Phineus, wilt thou seize Olympian Zeus  
And call thy Tyrian smiths to forge his fetters?  
Or wilt thou claim the archer bright Apollo  
To meet thy human doom, priest Polydaon?  
'Tis well; the danger's yours. Give me three days  
And I'll produce him.

*Ceph.* Priest, art thou content?

*Poly.* Exceed not thou the period by one day,  
Or tremble.

*Ceph. (rising)*

Happily decided. Rise  
My Cassiopea: now our hearts can rest  
From these alarms.

*Cepheus and Cassiopea leave the chamber.*

*Iol.* Keep thy knife sharp, sacrificant.  
King Phineus, I am grateful and advise  
Thy swift departure back to Tyre unmarried.

*He goes out.*

*Poly.* What hast thou done, King Phineus? All is ruined.

*Phin.* What, have the stripling's threats appalled thee, priest?

*Poly.* Thou hast demanded a bright dreadful god  
For victim. We might have slain young Iolaus:  
Wilt thou slay him whose tasselled ægis smote  
Terror into a hundred warriors?

*Phin.*

Priest,

Thou art a superstitious fool. Believe not  
The gods come down to earth with swords and wings,  
Or transitory raiment made in looms,  
Or bodies visible to mortal eyes.  
Far otherwise they come, with unseen steps  
And stroke invisible,—if gods indeed  
There are. I doubt it, who can find no room  
For powers unseen: the world's alive and moves  
By natural law without their intervention.

*Poly.*

King Phineus, doubt not the immortal gods.  
They love not doubters. If thou hadst lived as I,  
Daily devoted to the temple dimness,  
And seen the awful shapes that live in night,  
And heard the awful sounds that move at will  
When Ocean with the midnight is alone,  
Thou wouldst not doubt. Remember the dread portents  
High gods have sent on earth a hundred times  
When kings offended.

*Phin.*

Well, let them reign unquestioned  
Far from the earth in their too bright Olympus,  
So that they come not down to meddle here  
In what I purpose. For your ægis-bearer,  
Your winged and two-legged lion, he's no god.  
You hurried me away or I'd have probed  
His godlike guts with a good yard of steel  
To test the composition of his ichor.

*Poly.*

What of his flaming ægis lightning-tasselled?  
What of his winged sandals, King?

*Phin.*

The ægis?

Some mechanism of refracted light.  
The wings? Some new aerial contrivance  
A luckier Dædalus may have invented.  
The Greeks are scientists unequalled, bold  
Experimenters, happy in invention.

Nothing's incredible that they devise,  
And this man, Polydaon, is a Greek.

*Poly.* Have it your way. Say he was merely man!  
How do we profit by his blood?

*Phin.* O marvellous!

Thou hesitate to kill! thou seek for reasons!  
Is not blood always blood? I could not forfeit  
My right to marry young Andromeda;  
She is my claim to Syria. Leave something, priest,  
To fortune, but be ready for her coming  
And grasp ere she escape. The old way's best;  
Excite the commons, woo their thunderer,  
That plausible republican. Iolaus  
Once ended, by right of fair Andromeda  
I'll save and wear the crown. Priest, over Syria  
And all my Tyrians thou shalt be the one prelate,  
Should all go well.

*Poly.* All shall go well, King Phineus.

*They go.*

## ACT III

### SCENE 1

*The women's apartments of the Palace.  
Andromeda, Diomedes.*

*Andr.* All's ready, let us go.

*Diom.* Andromeda,  
My little mistress whom I love, let me  
Beseech you by that love, do not attempt it.  
Oh, this is no such pretty wilfulness  
As all men love to smile at and to punish  
With tenderness and chidings. It is a crime  
Full of impiety, a deed of danger  
That venturous and iron spirits would be aghast  
To dream of. You think because you are a child,  
You will be pardoned, because you are a princess  
No hand will dare to punish you. You do not know  
Men's hearts. They will not pause to pity you,  
They will not spare. The people in its rage  
Will tear us both to pieces, limb from limb,  
With blows and fury, roaring round like tigers.  
Will you expose yourself to that grim handling  
Who cry out at the smallest touch of pain?

*Andr.* Do not delay me on the brink of action.

You have said these things before.

*Diom.* You shall not do it.  
I will not go with you.

*Andr.* So you expose me  
To danger merely and break the oath you swore;  
For I must do it then unhelped.

*Diom.* I'll tell  
Your mother, child, and then you cannot go.

*Andr.* I shall die then on the third day from this.

*Diom.* What! you will kill yourself, and for two strangers  
You never saw? You are no human maiden  
But something far outside mortality,  
Princess, if you do this.

*Andr.* I shall not need.  
You threaten me with the fierce people's tearings,  
And shall I not be torn when I behold  
My fellows' piteous hearts plucked from their bosoms  
Between their anguished shrieks? I shall fall dead  
With horror and with pity at your feet:  
Then you'll repent this cruelty.

*Diom.* *She weeps.*  
Child, child!  
Hush, I will go with you. If I must die,  
I'll die.

*Andr.* Have I not loved you, Diomede?  
Have I not taken your stripes upon myself,  
Claiming your dear offences? Have I not lain  
Upon your breast, stealing from my own bed  
At night, and kissed your bosom and your hands  
For very love of you? And I had thought  
You loved me: but you do not care at last  
Whether I live or die.

*Diom.* Oh hush! I love you,  
I'll go with you. You shall not die alone,  
If you are bent on dying. I'll put on  
My sandals and be with you in a moment.  
Go, little princess. I am with you; go.

*Andr.* *She goes.*  
O you poor shuddering men, my human fellows,  
Horribly bound beneath the grisly knife  
You feel already groping for your hearts,

Pardon me each long moment that you wrestle  
 With grim anticipation. O, and you,  
 If there is any god in the deaf skies  
 That pities men or helps them, O protect me!  
 But if you are inexorably unmoved  
 And punish pity, I, Andromeda,  
 Who am a woman on this earth, will help  
 My brothers. Then, if you must punish me,  
 Strike home. You should have given me no heart;  
 It is too late now to forbid it feeling.

*She is going out. Athene appears.*

What is this light, this glory? who art thou,  
 O beautiful marble face amid the lightnings?  
 My heart faints with delight, my body trembles,  
 Intolerable ecstasy beats in my veins;  
 I am oppressed and tortured with thy beauty.

*Ath.* I am Athene.

*Andr.* Art thou a goddess? Thy name  
 We hear far off in Syria.

*Ath.* I am she  
 Who helps and has compassion on struggling mortals.

*Andr. (falling prostrate)*  
 Do not deceive me! I will kiss thy feet.  
 O joy! thou art! thou art!

*Ath.* Lift up thy head,  
 My servant.

*Andr.* Thou art! there are not only void  
 Azure and cold inexorable laws.

*Ath.* Stand up, O daughter of Cassiope.  
 Wilt thou then help these men of Babylonia,  
 My mortals whom I love?

*Andr.* I help myself,  
 When I help these.

*Ath.* To thee alone I gave  
 This knowledge. O virgin, O Andromeda,

It reached thee through that large and noble heart  
Of woman beating in a little child.  
But dost thou know that thy reward shall be  
Betrayal and fierce hatred? God and man  
Shall league in wrath to kill and torture thee  
Mid dire revilings.

*Andr.* My reward shall be  
To cool this anguish of pity in my heart

*Ath.* And be at peace: if dead, O still at peace!  
Thou fear'st not then? They will expose thee, child,  
To slaughter by the monsters of the deep  
Who shall come forth to tear thy limbs.

*Andr.* Beyond too  
Shall I be hated, in that other world?

*Ath.* Perhaps.

*Andr.* Wilt thou love me?

*Ath.* Thou art my child.

*Andr.* O mother, O Athene, let me go.  
They linger in anticipated pangs.

*Ath.* Go, child. I shall be near invisibly.

*She disappears.*

*Andromeda stands with clasped hands straining her eyes as if  
into infinity.*

*Diomedes returns.*

*Diom.* You are not gone as yet? what is this, princess?  
What is this light around you! How you are altered,  
Andromeda!

*Andr.* Diomedes, let us go.

*They go out.*

## SCENE 2

*In the Temple of Poseidon.*

*Cireas.*

*Cir.* I am done with thee, Poseidon Ennosigaios, man-slayer, ship-breaker, earth-shaker, lord of the waters! Never was faithful service so dirtily rewarded. In all these years not a drachma, not an obolus, not even a false coin for solace. And when thou hadst mocked me with hope, when a Prince had promised me all my findings, puttest thou me off with two pauperized merchants of Babylon? What, thou takest thy loud ravenous glut of the treasures that should have been mine and roarest derision at me with thy hundred-voiced laughter? Am I a sponge to suck up these insults? No! I am only moderately porous. I will break thy treasury, Poseidon, and I will run. Think not either to send thy sea-griffins after me. For I will live on the top of Lebanon, and thy monsters, when they come for me, shall snort and grin and gasp for breath and return to thee baffled and asthmatic.

*As he talks Iolaus and Perseus enter.*

*Iol.* What, Cireas, wilt thou run? I'll give thee gold  
To wing thy shoes, if thou wilt do my bidding.

*Cir.* I am overheard! I am undone! I am crucified! I  
am disembowelled!

*Iol.* Be tranquil, Cireas, fool, I come to help thee.

*Cir.* Do you indeed! I see, they have made you a god, for you know men's minds. But could old father Zeus find your newborn godhead no better work than to help thieves and give wings to runaways? Will you indeed help me,



god Iolaus? I can steal then under thy welcome protection? I can borrow Poseidon's savings and run?

*Iol.* Steal not: thou shalt have gold enough to buy  
Thy liberty and farms and slaves and cattle.

*Cir.* Prince, art thou under a vow of liberality? or being about to die, wilt thou distribute thy goods and chattels to deserving dishonesty? Do not mock me, for if thou raise hopes again in me and break them, I can only hang myself.

*Iol.* I mock thee not, thou shalt have glut of riches.

*Cir.* What must I do? I'd give thee nose and ears  
For farms and freedom.

*Pers.* Wherefore dost thou bribe  
This slave to undo a bond my sword unties?

*Iol.* I shrink from violence in the grim god's temple.

*Cir.* Zeus, art thou there with thy feathers and phosphorus? I pray thee, my good bright darling Zeus, do not come in the way of my earnings. Do not be so cantankerously virtuous, do not be so damnably economical. Good Zeus, I adjure thee by thy foot-plumes.

*Iol.* Cireas, wilt thou bring forth the wretched captives  
Who wait the butcher Polydaon's knife

With groanings? we would talk with them. Wilt thou?

*Cir.* Will I? Will I? I would do any bad turn to that scanty-hearted rampageous old ship-swallower there. I would do it for nothing, and for so much gold will I not?

*Iol.* And thou must shut thine eyes.

*Cir.* Eyes! I will shut mouth and nose and ears too,  
nor ask for one penny extra.

*Iol.* Dost thou not fear?

*Cir.* Oh, the blue-haired old bogy there? I have lived eighteen years in this temple and seen nothing of him but ivory and sapphires. I begin to think he cannot breathe out of water; no doubt, he is some kind of fish and walks on the point of his tail.

*Pers.* Enough, bring forth the Babylonian captives.

*Cir.* I run, Zeus, I run: but keep thy phosphorus lit and handy against Polydaon's return unasked for and untrumpeted.

*He runs out.*

*Pers.* O thou grim calmness imaged like a man  
That frown'st above the altar! dire Poseidon!  
Art thou that god indeed who smooths the sea  
With one finger, and when it is thy will,  
Ruffest the oceans with thy casual breathing?  
Art thou not rather, lord, some murderous  
And red imagination of this people,  
The shadow of a soul that dreamed of blood  
And took this dimness? If thou art Poseidon,  
The son of Cronos, I am Cronos' grandchild,  
Perseus, and in my soul Athene moves  
With lightnings.

*Iol.* I hear the sound of dragging chains.

*Cireas returns with Tyrnaus and Smerdas.*

*Pers.* Smerdas and thou, Tyrnaus, once again  
We meet.

*Smer.* Save me, yet save me.

*Pers.* If thou art worth it,  
I may.

*Smer.* Thou shalt have gold. I am well worth it.  
I'll empty Babylonia of its riches  
Into thy wallet.

*Pers.* Has terror made thee mad?  
Refrain from speech! Thine eyes are calm, Tyrnaus.

*Tyr.* I have composed my soul to my sad fortunes.  
Yet wherefore sad? Fate has dealt largely with me.  
I have been thrice shipwrecked, twice misled in deserts,  
Wounded six times in battle with wild men  
For life and treasure. I have outspent kings:  
I have lost fortunes and amassed them: princes

Have been my debtors, kingdoms lost and won  
By lack or having of a petty fraction  
Of my rich incomings: and now Fate gives me  
This tragic, not inglorious death: I am  
The banquet of a god. It fits, it fits,  
And I repine not.

*Pers.* But will these help, Tyrnaus,  
To pass the chill eternity of Hades?  
This memory of glorious breathing life,  
Will it alleviate the endless silence?

*Tyr.* But there are lives beyond, and we meanwhile  
Move delicately amid aerial things  
Until the green earth wants us.

*Pers.* (*shearing his chains with a touch of his sword*)

Yet awhile  
Of the green earth take all thy frank desire,  
Merchant: the sunlight would be loth to lose thee.

*Smer.* O radiant helpful youth! O son of splendour!  
I live again.

*Pers.* Thou livest, but in chains,  
Smerdas.

*Smer.* But thy good sword will quickly shear them.

*Pers.* Thou wilt give me all Babylonia holds  
Of riches for reward?

*Smer.* More, more, much more!

*Pers.* But thou must go to Babylon to fetch it.  
Then what security have I of payment?

*Smer.* Keep good Tyrnaus here, my almost brother.

I will come back and give thee gold, much gold.

*Pers.* You'd leave him here? in danger? with the knife  
Searching for him and grim Poseidon angry?

*Smer.* What danger, when he is with thee, O youth,  
Strong radiant youth?

*Pers.* Yourself then stay with me,  
And he shall bring the ransom from Chaldea.

*Smer.* Here? here? Oh God! they'll seize me yet again  
And cut my heart out. Let me go, dear youth,  
Oh, let me go; I'll give thee double gold.

*Pers.* Thou sordid treacherous thing of fears, I'll not  
Venture for such small gain as the poor soul  
Thou holdest, nor drive with danger losing bargains.

*Smer.* Oh, do not jest! it is not good to jest  
With death and horror.

*Pers.* I jest not.

*Smer.* Oh God! thou dost.

*Diom. (without)*

Cireas!

*Cir. (jumping)*

Who? who? who?

*Iol.* Is't not a woman's voice?

Withdraw into the shadow: let our swords  
Be out against surprise. Hither, Tyrnaus.

*Diom.* Cireas! where are you, Cireas? it is I.

*Cir.* It is the little palace scamp, Diomedes.  
Plague take her! How she fluttered the heart in me!

*Iol.* Say nothing of us, merchant, or thou diest.

*Iolaus, Perseus and Tyrnaus withdraw into the dimness of  
the Temple. Andromeda and Diomedes enter.*

*Cir.* Princess Andromeda!

*Pers. (apart)*

Andromeda!

Iolaus' rosy sister! O child goddess  
Dropped recently from heaven! Its light is still  
Upon thy face, thou marvel!

*Iol.* My little sister

In these grim precincts, who so feared their shadows!

*Andr.* Cireas, my servant Diomedes means

To tell you of some bargain. Will you walk yonder?

*Cireas and Diomedes walk apart talking.*  
Art thou, as these chains say, the mournful victim

Our savage billows spared and men would murder?  
But was there not another? Have they brought thee  
From thy sad prison to the shrine alone?

*Smer.* He,—he,—

*Andr.* Has terror so possessed thy tongue,  
It cannot do its office? Oh, be comforted.  
Although red horror has its grasp on thee,  
I dare to tell thee there is hope.

*Smer.* What hope?

Ah heaven! what hope! I feel the knife even now  
Hacking my bosom. If thou bring'st me hope,  
I'll know thee for a goddess and adore thee.

*Andr.* Be comforted: I bring thee more than hope,  
Cireas!

*Cir.* You'll give me chains? you'll give me jewels?

*Andr.* All of my own that I can steal for you.

*Cir.* Steal boldly, O honey-sweet image of a thief, steal  
and fear not. I rose for good luck after all this excellent  
morning! O Poseidon, had I known there was more to be  
pocketed in thy disservice than in thy service, would I have  
misspent these eighteen barren years?

*Andr.* Undo this miserable captive's bonds.

*Smer.* What! I shall be allowed to live! Is't true?

*Andr.* No, I'll undo them, Cireas; I shall feel  
I freed him. Is there so much then to unlink?  
O ingenuity of men to hurt  
And bind and slay their brothers!

*Smer.* 'Tis not a dream,

The horror was the dream. She smiles on me  
A wonderful glad smile of joy and kindness,  
Making a sunshine. Oh, be quicker, quicker.  
Let me escape this hell where I have eaten  
And drunk of terror and have slept with death.

*Andr.* Are you so careless of the friend who shared  
The tears and danger? Where is he? Cireas!

*Tyr. (coming forward)*

O thou young goddess with the smile! Behold him,  
Tyrnaus the Chaldean.

*Andr. (dropping the chain which binds Smerdas)*

Already free!

Who has forestalled me?

*Tyr.*

Maiden, art thou vexed

To see me unbound?

*Andr.*

I grudge your rescuer the happy task  
Heaven meant for me of loosening your chains.  
It would have been such joy to feel the cold  
Hard irons drop apart between my fingers!  
Who freed you?

*Tyr.*

A god as radiant as thyself,  
Thou merciful sweetness.

*Andr.*

Had he not a look  
Like the Olympian's? Was he not bright like Hermes  
Or Phœbus?

*Tyr.*

He was indeed. Thou know'st him then?

*Andr.*

In dreams I have met him. He was here but now?

*Tyr.*

He has withdrawn into the shadow, virgin.

*Smer.*

Why do you leave me bound, and talk, and talk,  
As if Death had not still his fingers on me?

*Andr. (resuming her task)*

Forgive me! Tyrnaus, did that radiant helper  
Who clove thy chains, forget to help this poor  
Pale trembling man?

*Tyr.*

Because he showed too much  
The sordid fear that pities only itself,  
He left him to his fate.

*Andr.*

Alas, poor human man!  
Why, we have all so many sins to answer,  
It would be hard to have cold justice dealt us.  
We should be kindly to each other's faults  
Remembering our own. Is't not enough

To see a face in tears and heal the sorrow,  
Or must we weigh whether the face is fair  
Or ugly? I think that even a snake in pain  
Would tempt me to its succour, though I knew  
That afterwards 'twould bite me! But he is a god  
Perhaps who did this and his spotless radiance  
Abhors the tarnish of our frailer natures.

*Smer.* Oh, I am free! I fall and kiss thy robe,  
O goddess, O deliverer.

*Andr.* You must  
Go quickly from this place. There is a cave  
Near to those unkind rocks where you were shipwrecked,  
A stone-throw up the cliff. We found it there  
Climbing and playing, reckless of our limbs  
In the sweet joy of sunshine, breeze and movement,  
When we were children, I and Diomedé.  
None else will dream of it. There have I stored  
Enough of food and water. Closely lurk  
Behind its curtains of fantastic stone:  
Venture not forth, though your hearts pine for sunlight,  
Or Death may take you back into his grip.  
When hot pursuit and search have been tired out,  
I'll find you golden wings will carry you  
To your Chaldea.

*Smer.* Can you not find out divers  
Who'll rescue our merchandise from the sunk rocks  
Where it is prisoned?

*Tyr.* You have escaped grim murder,  
Yet dream of nothing but your paltry gems!  
You will call back Heaven's anger on our heads.

*Smer.* We cannot beg our way to far Chaldea.

*Andr.* Diving is dangerous there: I will not risk  
Men's lives for money. I promised Círeas what I have,  
And yet you shall not go unfurnished home.  
I'll beg a sum from my brother Iolaus  
Will help you to Chaldea.

*Smer.*

O my dear riches!

Must you lie whelmed beneath the Syrian surge  
Uncared for?

*Andr. (to Diomedes)*

Take them to the cave. Show Cireas  
The hidden mouth. I'll loiter and expect you  
Under the hill-side, where sweet water plashes  
From the grey fountain's head, our fountain. Mer-  
chants, go;

Athene guard you!

*Tyr.*

Not before I kneel

And touch thy feet with reverent humble hands,  
O human merciful divinity,  
Who by thy own sweet spirit moved, unasked,  
Not knowing us, cam'st from thy safe warm chamber  
Here where Death broods grim-visaged in his home,  
To save two unseen, unloved, alien strangers,  
And being a woman feared not urgent death,  
And being a child shook not before God's darkness  
And that insistent horror of a world  
O'ershadowing ours. O surely in these regions  
Where thou wert born, pure-eyed Andromeda,  
There shall be some divine epiphany  
Of calm sweet-hearted pity for the world,  
And harsher gods shall fade into their Hades.

*Smer.*

You prattle, and at any moment, comes  
The dreadful priest with clutch upon my shoulder.  
Come! come! you, slave-girl, lead the way, accursèd!  
You loiter?

*Andr.*

Chide not my servant, Babylonian.

Go, Diomedes; darkness like a lid  
Will soon shut down upon the rugged beach  
And they may stumble as they walk. Go, Cireas.

*Diomedes and Cireas go out, followed by the merchants.*

Alone I stand before thee, grim Poseidon,



Here in thy darkness, with thy altar near  
That keeps fierce memory of tortured groans  
And human shrieks of victims, and, unforced,  
I yet pollute my soul with thy bloody nearness  
To tell thee that I hate, contemn, defy thee.  
I am no more than a brief living woman,  
Yet am I more divine than thou, for I  
Can pity. I have torn thy destined prey  
From thy red jaws. They say thou dost avenge  
Fearfully insult. Avenge thyself, Poseidon.

*She goes out: Perseus and Iolaus come forward.*

*Pers.* Thou art the mate for me, Andromeda!  
Now, now I know wherefore my eager sandals  
Bore me resistlessly to thee and Syria.

*Iol.* This was Andromeda and not Andromeda,  
I never saw her woman till this hour.

*Pers.* Knew you so ill the child you loved so well,  
Iolaus?

*Iol.* Sometimes we know them least  
Whom most we love and constantly consort with.

*Pers.* How daintily she moved as if a hand  
She loved were on her curls and she afraid  
Of startling the sweet guest!

*Iol.* O Perseus, Perseus!

She has defied a strong and dreadful god,  
And dreadfully he will avenge himself.

*Pers.* Iolaus, friend, I think not quite at random  
Athena led me to these happy shores  
That bore such beautiful twin heads for me  
Sun-curled, Andromeda and Iolaus,  
That I might see their beauty marred with death  
By cunning priests and blood-stained gods. Fear not  
The event. I bear Athena's sword of sharpness.

*They go out.*

### SCENE 3

*Darkness. The Temple of Poseidon.*

*Polydaon enters.*

*Poly.*   Cireas! Why, Cireas! Cireas! Knave, I call you!  
Is the rogue drunk or sleeps? Cireas! you, Cireas!  
My voice comes echoing from the hollow shrine  
To tell me of solitude. Where is this drunkard?  
A dreadful thing it is to stand alone  
In this weird temple. Forty years of use  
Have not accustomed me to its mute threatening.  
It seems to me as if dead victims moved  
With awful faces all about this stone  
Invisibly here palpable. And Ocean  
Groans ever like a wounded god aloud  
Against our rocky base, his voice at night  
Weirdly insistent. I will go and talk  
With the Chaldeans in their chains: better  
Their pleasing groans and curses than the hush.

*He goes out and after awhile comes back, disordered.*

Wake, sleeping Syria, wake. Thou art violated,  
Thy heart cut out: thou art outraged Syria, outraged,  
Thy harvests and thy safety and thy sons  
Already murdered! O hideous sacrilege!  
Who can have dared this crime? Could the slave Cireas  
Have ventured thus? O, no, it is the proud  
God-hating son of Cepheus, Iolaus,  
And that swift stranger borne through impious air  
To upheave the bases of our old religion.  
They have rescued the Chaldeans. Cireas lies  
Murdered perhaps on the sound-haunted cliffs

Who would have checked their crime. I'll strike the gong  
That only tolls when dread calamity  
Strides upon Syria. Wake, doomed people, wake.  
*He rushes out. A gong sounds for some moments. It is silent  
and he returns, still more disordered.*

Wake! Wake! Do you not hear Poseidon raging  
Beneath the cliffs with tiger-throated menace?  
Do you not hear his feet upon the boulders  
Sounding, a thunderous report of peril,  
As he comes roaring up his stony ramparts  
To slay you? Ah, the city wakes. I hear  
A surge confused of hurrying, cries and tumult.  
What is this darkness moving on me? Gods!  
Where is the image? Whose is this awful godhead?  
*The shadow of Poseidon appears, vague  
and alarming at first, then distinct and terrible in the  
darkness.*

*Pos.* My victims, Polydaon, give me my victims.

*Poly.* (*falling prostrate*)

It was not I, it was not I, but others.

*Pos.* My victims, Polydaon, give me my victims.

*Poly.* O dire offended god, not upon me  
Fall thy loud scourges! I am innocent.

*Pos.* How art thou innocent, when the Chaldeans  
Escape? Give me my victims, Polydaon.

*Poly.* I know not how they fled nor who released them.  
Gnash not thy blood-stained teeth on me, O Lord,  
Nor slay me with those glaring eyes. Thy voice  
Thunders, a hollow terror, through my soul.

*Pos.* Hear me, unworthy priest. While thou art scheming  
For thy own petty mortal aims abroad,  
I am insulted in my temple, laughed at  
By slaves, by children done injurious wrong,  
My victims snatched from underneath my roof  
By any casual hand, my dreadful image

Looking deserted on: for none avenges.  
*Poly.* Declare thy will, O Lord, it shall be done.  
*Pos.* Therefore I will awake, I will arise,  
 And you shall know me for a god. This day  
 The loud Assyrians shall break shouting in  
 With angry hooves like a huge-riding flood  
 Upon this country. The pleasant land of Syria  
 Shall be dispeopled. Wolves shall howl in Damascus,  
 And Gaza and Euphrates bound a desert.  
 My resonant and cliff-o'ervaulting seas,  
 Black-cowled, with foaming tops thundering shall climb  
 Into your lofty seats of ease and wash them  
 Strangled into the valleys. From the deep  
 My ravening herds pastured by Amphitrite  
 Shall walk upon your roads, devour your maidens  
 And infants, tear your strong and armed men  
 Helplessly shrieking like weak-wristed women,  
 Till all are dead. And thou, neglectful priest,  
 Shalt go down living into Tartarus  
 Where knives fire-pointed shall disclose thy breast  
 And pluck thy still-renewing heart from thee  
 For ever till the world cease shall be thy torments.  
*Poly.* O dreadful Lord!

*Pos.* If thou wouldst shun the doom,  
 And keep my Syria safe, discover then  
 The rescuer of the Babylonian captives  
 And to the monsters of my deep expose  
 For a delicious banquet. Offer the heart  
 Of Iolaus here still warmly alive  
 And sobbing blood to leave his beautiful body;  
 • Slaughter on his yet not inanimate bosom,  
 The hero for whose love he braved my rage,  
 And let the sacrilegious house of Cepheus  
 Be blotted from the light. Thy sordid aims  
 Put from thy heart: remember to be fearless.

I will inhabit thee, if thou deserve it.

*He disappears thundering.*

**Poly.** Yes, Lord! shall not thy dreadful will be done?

*Phineus enters and his Tyrians with torches.*

**Phin.** Wherefore has the gong's ominous voice to-night  
Affrighted Syria? Are you Polydaon  
Who crouch here?

**Poly.** (*rising*)

Welcome, King Phineus.

**Phin.** Who art thou?

Thine eyes roll round in a bright glaring horror  
And rising up thou shak'st thy gloomy locks  
As if they were a hungry lion's mane  
Preparing for the leap. Speak, Polydaon.

**Poly.** Yes, I shall speak, of sacrilegè and blood.  
Its terrible forfeit, and the wrath of Heaven.

*Cepheus enters with Dercetes and  
Syrian soldiers, Therops, Perissus and a throng of Syrians;  
scores of torches.*

**Ceph.** What swift calamity, O Polydaon,  
Has waked to clamorousness the fatal gong  
At which all Syria trembles? What is this face  
Thou showest like some grim accusing phantom's  
In the torches' light? Wherefore rang's thou the bell?

**Poly.** It rang the doom of thee and all thy house,  
Cepheus.

**Ceph.** My doom!

**Phin.** (*aside*)

I glimpse a striking plot  
And 'tis well-staged too.

**Poly.** The victims are released,  
The victims bound for terrible Poseidon.  
Thou and thy blood are guilty.

**Ceph.** Thou art mad!

*Poly.* 'Tis thou and thy doomed race are seized with madness  
Who with light hearts offend against Poseidon.  
But they shall perish. Thou and thy blood shall perish.  
*Ceph.* O, thou appal'st me. Wherefore rings out thy voice  
Against me like a clamorous bell of doom  
In the huge darkness?

*Poly.* Poseidon's self arose  
In the dim night before me with a voice  
As angry as the loud importunate surge  
Denouncing thee. Thou and thy blood shall perish.

*Phin.* Cepheus, let search be made. Perhaps the victims  
Have not fled far, and all may yet be saved.

*Ceph.* Scour, captain, scour all Syria for the fugitives.  
Dercetes and thy troop, down to the coast,  
Scan every boulder: out, out, Meriones,  
Callias, Oridamas and Pericarpus,  
Ring in the country-side with cordons armed,  
Enter each house, ransack most private chambers,  
But find them.

*Dercetes and the captains go out with  
their soldiers, the people making way for them.*

*Poly.* People of Syria, hearken, hearken!  
Poseidon for this sacrilege arouses  
The Assyrian from the land and from the sea  
His waves and all their sharp-toothed monsters: your  
men  
Shall be rent and disembowelled, your women ravished,  
Butchered by foemen or by Ocean's dogs  
Horribly eaten: what's left, the flood shall swallow.

*Cries and groans.*

*Voices* Spare us, Poseidon, spare us, dread deity!

*Poly.* Would you be spared? Obey Poseidon, people.

*Ther.* Thou art our King, command us.

*Poly.* Bring the woman,  
Chaldean Cassiopea and her daughter.

Tell them that Syria's King commands them here.

*Therops and others go out to do his bidding.*

*Phin.* What mean you, priest?

*Ceph.* Wherefore my queen and princess?

*Poly.* I do the will of terrible Poseidon.

Thou and thy blood shall perish.

*Phin.* Thou then art mad!

I thought this was a skilful play. Think'st thou

I will permit the young Andromeda,

My bride, to be mishandled or exposed

To the bloody chances of wild popular fury

In such a moment?

*Poly.* Phineus, I know not what thou wilt permit:

I know what terrible Poseidon wills.

*Phin.* Poseidon! thou gross superstitious fool,

Hast thou seen shadows in the night and took'st them

For angry gods?

*Poly.* Refrain from impious words,

Or else the doom shall take thee in its net.

*Phin.* Refrain thyself from impious deeds, or else

A hundred Tyrian blades shall search thy brain

To look for thy lost reason.

*Poly. (recoiling)*

Patience, King Phineus!

It may be, thou shalt have thy whole desire

By other means.

*Dercetes returns.*

*Derc.* One of the fugitives is seized.

*Poly.* Where, where?

*Derc.* Creeping about the sea-kissed rocks we found him

Where the ship foundered, babbling greedily

Of his lost wealth, in cover of the darkness.

*Poly.* Now we shall know the impious hand. Tremble,

Tremble, King Cepheus.

*Ceph. (aside)*

I am besieged, undone.  
No doubt it is my rash-brained Iolaus  
Ruins us all.

*Soldiers enter, driving in Smerdas.*

*Smer. (groaning)*

I am dragged back to hell.  
I am lost and nothing now can save me.

*Poly.*

Chaldean,  
The choice is thine. Say, wilt thou save thy life  
And see the green fields of thy land once more  
And kiss thy wife and children?

*Smer.*

You mock me, mock me!

*Poly.*

No, man! thou shalt have freedom at a price  
Or torture gratis.

*Smer.*

Price? price? I'll give the price.

*Poly.*

The names of those whose impious hands released thee:  
Which if thou speak not, thou shalt die, not given  
To the dire god, for he asks other victims,  
But crushed with fearful tortures.

*Smer.*

O kind Heaven!  
Have mercy! Must I give her up,—that smile  
Of sweetness and those kindly eyes, to death?  
It is a dreadful choice! I cannot do it.

*Poly.*

It was a woman did this!

*Smer.*

I will say no more.

*Ceph.*

I breathe again: it was not Iolaus.

*Poly.*

Seize him and twist him into anguished knots!  
Let every bone be crushed and every sinew  
Wrenched and distorted, till each inch of flesh  
Gives out its separate shriek.

*Smer.*

O spare me, spare me:  
I will tell all.

*Poly.*

Speak truth and I will give thee  
Bushels of gold and shipment to Chaldea.

*Smer.*

Gold? Gold? Shall I have gold?



*Poly.*

Thou shalt.

*Smer. (after a pause)*

The youth

You would have taken on the beach, arrived,  
And his the sword bit through my iron fetters.

*Poly.* Palter not! Who was with him? Thou shalt have gold.

*Smer.* Young Iolaus.

*Ceph.* Alas!

*Phin.* Thus far is well.

*Poly.* Thou hast a shifty look about the eyes.

Thou spokest of a woman. Was't the Queen?

Hast thou told all? His face grows pale. To torment!

*Smer. (groaning)*

I will tell all. Swear then I shall have gold  
And safety.

*Poly.* By grim Poseidon's head I swear.

*Smer.* O hard necessity! The fair child princess,  
Andromeda, with her young slave-girl came,  
She was my rescuer.

*There is a deep silence of amazement.*

*Phin.* I'll not believe this! could that gentle child  
Devise and execute so huge a daring?

Thou liest: thou art part of some foul plot.

*Poly.* He has the accent of unwilling truth.

Phineus, she is death's bride, not thine. Wilt thou  
Be best man in that dolorous wedding? Forbear  
And wait Poseidon's will.

*Phin. (low)*

Shall I have Syria?

*Poly.* When it is mine to give thee.

*Therops returns.*

*Ther.* The Queen arrives.

*Poly.* Remove the merchant.

*The soldiers take Smerdas into the  
background, Cassiopea enters with Andromeda and Diomedes,  
Nebassar and the Chaldean guard.*

- Cass.* Keep ready hands upon your swords, Chaldeans.  
What is this tumult? Wherefore are we called  
At this dim hour and to this solemn place?
- Poly.* Com'st thou with foreign falchions, Cassiopea,  
To brave the Syrian gods? Abandon her,  
Chaldeans. 'Tis a doomed head your swords encompass.
- Cass.* Since when dost thou give thy commands in Syria  
And sentence queens? My husband and thy King  
Stands near thee; let him speak.
- Poly.* Let him. There stands he.
- Cass.* Why hidest thou thine eyes, monarch of Syria,  
Sinking thy forehead like a common man  
Unkingly? What grief o'ertakes thee?
- Poly.* You see he speaks not.  
'Tis I command in Syria. Is't not so,  
My people?
- Ther.* 'Tis so.
- Poly.* Stand forth, Andromeda.
- Cass.* What would you with my child? I stand here for her.
- Poly.* She is accused of impious sacrilege,  
And she must die.
- Cass.* (*shuddering*) Die! Who accuses her?
- Poly.* Bring the Chaldean.
- Diom.* Oh, the merchant's seized  
And all is known. Deny it, my sweet lady,  
And we may yet be saved.
- Andr.* Oh poor, poor merchant!  
Did I unloose thy bonds in vain?
- Diom.* Say nothing.
- Andr.* And why should I conceal it, Diomede?  
What I had courage in my heart to do,  
Surely I can have courage to avow.
- Diom.* But they will kill us both.

- Andr.* I am a princess.  
Why should I lie? From fear? But I am not afraid.  
*Meanwhile the soldiers have brought Smerdas to the front.*
- Poly.* Look, merchant. Say before all who rescued thee?  
She was it?
- Smer.* It is she. Oh, do not look  
With that sad smile upon me. I am compelled.
- Poly.* Is this the slave-girl?
- Smer.* It is she.
- Cass.* This wretch  
Lies at thy bidding. Put him to the question.
- Poly.* I'll not permit it.
- Per.* Why man, it is the law. We'll not believe  
Our little princess did the crime.
- Cass.* Syrians!  
Look at the paltering priest. Do you not see  
It is a plot, this man his instrument  
Who lies so wildly? He'll not have him questioned.  
No doubt 'twas he himself released the man,—  
Who else could do it in this solemn temple  
Where human footsteps fear to tread? He uses  
The name of great Poseidon to conceal  
His plottings. He would end the line of Cepheus  
And reign in Syria.
- Per.* This sounds probable.
- Voices* Does he misuse Poseidon's name? unbind  
Victims? Kill him!
- Cass.* Look how he pales, O people!  
Is't thus that great Poseidon's herald looks  
When charged with the god's fearful menaces?  
He diets you with forgeries and fictions.
- Cries* Let him be strangled!
- Phin.* This is a royal woman.
- Poly.* Well, let the merchant then be put to question.

*Per.* Come and be tickled, merchant. I am the butcher.  
Do you see my cleaver? I will torture you kindly.

*Smer.* O help me, save me, lady Andromeda.

*Andr.* Oh, do not lay your cruel hands upon him.  
I did release him.

*Cass.* Ah, child Andromeda.

*Per.* You, little princess! Wherefore did you this?

*Andr.* Because I would not have their human hearts  
Mercilessly uprooted for the bloody  
Monster you worship as a god! because  
I am capable of pain and so can feel  
The pain of others! For which if you I love  
Must kill me, do it. I alone am guilty.

*Poly.* Now, Cassiopea! You are silent, Queen.  
Lo, Syrians, lo, my forgeries and fictions!  
Lo, my vile plottings! Enough. Poseidon wills  
That on the beach this criminal be bound  
For monsters of the sea to rend in fragments,  
And all the royal ancient blood of Syria  
Must be poured richly forth to appease and cleanse.

*Cass.* Swords from the scabbard! gyre in your King from  
harm,  
Chaldeans! Hew your way through all opposers!  
Thou in my arms, my child Andromeda!  
I'll keep my daughter safe upon my bosom  
Against the world.

*Poly.* What dost thou, Babylonian?

*Cass.* To the palace,  
My trusty countrymen!

*Poly.* Oppose them, soldiers!  
They cheat the god of the crime-burdened heads  
Doomed by his just resentment.

*Derc.* We are few:  
And how shall we lay hands on royalty?

*Poly.* Nebassar, darest thou oppose the gods?

*Neb.* Out of my sword's way, priest! I do my duty.

*Poly.* Draw, King of Tyre!

*Phin.* 'Tis not my quarrel, priest.

*Nebassar and the Chaldeans with drawn swords  
go out from the Temple, taking the King and Queen,  
Andromeda and Diomedé.*

*Poly.* People of Syria, you have let them pass!  
You fear not then the anger of Poseidon?

*Per.* Would you have us spitted upon the Chaldean  
swords? Mad priest, must we be broached like joints and  
tossed like pancakes? We have no weapons. To-morrow  
we will go to the Palace and what must be done shall be  
done. But 'tis not just that many should be slain for the  
crime of one and the house of Syria outrooted. Follow me  
and observe my commands, brave aristocracy of the shop,  
gallant commoners of the lathe and anvil, follow Perissus.  
I will lead you to-night to your soft downy beds and to-  
morrow to the Palace.

*All the Syrians go out led by Therops and Perissus.*

*Phin.* Thou hast done foolishly in this, O priest.  
Hadst thou demanded the one needful head  
Of Iolaus, it was easy: but now  
The tender beauty of Andromeda  
Compels remorse and the astonished people  
Recoil from the bold waste of royal blood  
Thou appointest them to spill. I see that zeal  
And frantic superstition are bad plotters.  
Henceforth I work for my sole hand, to pluck  
My own good from the storms of civic trouble  
This night prepares.

*He goes out with his Tyrians.*

*Poly.* O terrible Poseidon,  
Thyself avenge thyself! hurl on this people  
The sea and the Assyrian. Where is the power

Thou said'st should tarry with me? I have failed.

*He remains sunk in thought for awhile,  
then raises his head.*

To-morrow, Syrian? to-morrow is Poseidon's.

## ACT IV

### SCENE 1

*The country-side, high ground near the city of Cepheus.*

*A crowd of Syrians, men and women,  
running in terror, among them Chabrias, Megas, Baltis,  
Pasithea, Morus, Gardas, Syrax.*

*Balt.* (stopping and sinking down on her knees)

Ah, whither can we run where the offended  
Poseidon shall not reach us.

*Chab.*

Stop, countrymen;

Let's all die here together.

*Others*

Let's stop and die.

*Meg.*

Run, run! Poseidon's monsters howl behind.

*Pas.*

O day of horror and of punishment!

*Syr.*

Let us stay here; it is high ground, perhaps  
The monster will not reach us.

*Damoetes enters.*

*Dam.*

I have seen the terror near, and yet I live.  
It vomits fire for half a league.

*Syr.*

It is

As long as a sea-jutting promontory.

*Dam.*

It has six monstrous legs.

*Syr.*

Eight, eight; I saw it.

*Meg.*

Chabrias, it caught thy strong son by the foot,  
And dashed his head against a stone, that all  
The brains were scattered.

*Chab.*

Alas, my son! I will

Go back and join you in the monster's jaws.

*He is stopped by the others.*

*Dam.* It seized thy daughter, O Pasithea,  
And tore her limbs apart, which it devoured  
While yet the trunk lay screaming under its foot.

*Pas.* Oh God!

*She swoons.*

*All* Lift her up, lift her up. Alas!

*Meg.* These sorrows may be ours.

*Balt.* Ah Heaven, my son!

I did not wake him when this news of horror  
Plucked me from sleep.

*Gard.* My wife and little daughter  
Are in my cottage where perhaps the monster  
Vomits his fiery breath against the door.  
I will go back.

*Mor.* Let us go back, Damoetes.

*Dam.* I'll not go back for twenty thousand wives  
And children. Life is sweet.

*Many voices*

Let us not go.

*They stop Gardas.*

*Meg.* What noise is that?

*Balt.* Run, run, 'tis some new horror.

*All are beginning to run. Therops enters.*

*Ther.* Where will you run? Poseidon's wrath is near you  
And over you and behind you and before you.  
His monsters from the ooze ravage howling  
Along our shores, and the indignant sea  
Swelled to unnatural tumultuous mountains  
Is climbing up the cliffs with spume and turmoil.

*Dam.* O let us run a hundred leagues and live.

*Ther.* Before you is another death. Last night  
The Assyrians at three points came breaking in  
Across the border and the frontier forces  
Are slain. They torture, burn and violate:  
Young girls and matrons, men and boys are butchered.



Salvation is not in your front and flight  
Casts you from angry gods to men more ruthless.  
I wonder not that you are silent, stunned  
With fear: but will you listen, countrymen,  
And I will show you a cure for these fierce evils.

*Voices* Oh tell us, tell us, you shall be our king.

*Meg.* We'll set thy image by the great Poseidon's  
And worship it.

*Ther.* What is the unexampled cause of wrath  
Which whelms you with these horrors? Is't not the bold  
Presumptuous line of Cepheus? Is't not your kings  
Whose pride, swollen by your love and homage, Syrians,  
Insults the gods, rescues Poseidon's victims  
And with a sacrilegious levity  
Exposes all your lives to death and woe?  
There is the fount of all your misery, Syrians,  
For this the horror eats you up,—your kings.

*Cries* Away with them! throw them into the sea—let  
Poseidon swallow them!

*Ther.* But most I blame the fell Chaldean woman  
Who rules you. What is this Cepheus but a puppet  
Dressed up in royal seemings, pushed forth and danced  
At her caprice? Unhappy is the land  
That women rule, that country more unhappy  
That is to heartless foreigners a prey.  
But thou, O ill-starred Syria, two worst evils  
Hast harboured in a single wickedness.  
What cares the light Chaldean for your gods,  
Your lives, your sons, your daughters? She lives at ease  
Upon the revenues of your hard toil,  
Depending on favourites, yes, on paramours,—  
For why have women favourites but to ease  
Their sensual longings?—and insults your deities.  
Do you not think she rescued the Chaldeans  
Because they were her countrymen, and used

Her daughter, young Andromeda, for tool  
That her fair childish beauty might disarm  
Wrath and suspicion? then, the crime unearthed,  
Braved all and set her fierce Chaldeans' swords  
Against the good priest Polydaon's heart,—  
You did not hear that?—the good Polydaon  
Who serves Poseidon with such zeal! Therefore  
The god is angry: your wives, sisters, daughters,  
Must suffer for Chaldean Cassiopea.

*Cries* Let us seize her and kill, kill, kill, kill her!

*Dam.*

Burn her!

*Mor.* Roast her!

*Meg.* Tear her into a million fragments.

*Chab.* But are they not our kings? We must obey them.

*Ther.* Wherefore must we obey them? Kings are men,  
And they are set above their fellow-mortals  
To serve us, friends,—not, surely, for our hurt!  
Why should our sons and daughters bleed for them,  
Syrians? Is not our blood as dear, as precious,  
As human? Why should these kings, these men, go clad  
In purple and in velvet while you toil  
For little and are hungry and are naked.

*Cries* True, true, true!

*Card.* This is a wonderful man, this Therops. He has a  
brain, countrymen.

*Dam.* A brain! He is no cleverer than you or I, Morus.

*Mor.* I should think not, Damoetes!

*Dam.* We knew these things long ago and did not need  
wind-bag Therops to tell us!

*Mor.* We have talked them over often, Damoetes.

*Meg.* We'll have no more kings, countrymen.

*Cries* No kings, no kings!

*Gard.* Or Therops shall be king.

*Cries* Yes, Therops king! Therops king!

*Dam.* Good king Lungs! Oh, let us make him king,

Morus,—he will not pass wind in the market-place so often.

*Ther.* Poseidon is our king; we are his people.  
Gods we must worship; why should we worship men  
And set a heavenly crown on mortal weakness?  
They have offended against great Poseidon,  
They are guilty of a fearful sacrilege.  
Let them perish.

*Cries* Kill them! let us appease Poseidon.

*Chab.* Worship Heaven's power, but bow before the king.

*Ther.* What need have we of kings? What are these kings?

*Chab.* They are the seed of gods.

*Ther.* Then, let them settle  
Themselves their quarrel with their Olympian kindred.  
Why should we suffer? Let Andromeda  
Be exposed and Iolaus sacrificed;  
Then shall Poseidon's wrath retire again  
Into the continent of his vast billows.

*Chab.* If it must be so, let it come by award  
Of quiet justice.

*Ther.* Justice! They are the judges  
Who did the crime. Wherefore dost thou defend them?  
Thou favourest then Poseidon's enemies?

*Cries* Kill him too, kill Chabrias. Poseidon, great  
Poseidon! we are Poseidon's people.

*Dam.* Let him join his son and by the same road.

*Mor.* Beat his brains out—to see if he has any.

Ho! ho! ho!

*Ther.* Let him alone: he is a fool. Here comes  
Our zealous good kind priest, our Polydaon.

*Polydaon enters.*

*Cries* Polydaon! Polydaon! the good Polydaon! Save us,  
Polydaon:

*Poly.* Ah, do you call me now to save you? Last night  
You did not save me when the foreign swords  
Were near my heart.

- Meg.* Forgive us and protect.
- Dam.* You, lead us to the palace, be our chief.
- Mor.* We'll have no kings: lead, you: on to the palace!
- Meg.* Poseidon shall be king, thou his vicegerent.
- Gard.* Therops at thy right hand!
- Cries* Yes, Therops! Therops!
- Poly.* Oh, you are sane now, being let blood by scourgings!  
Unhurt had been much better. But Poseidon  
Pardons and I will save.
- Cries* Polydaon for ever, the good Polydaon, Poseidon's  
Viceroy!
- Poly.* Swear then to do Poseidon's will.
- Cries* We swear!
- Dam.* Command and watch the effect!
- Poly.* Will not the tongue  
Of Cassiopea once more change you, people?
- Dam.* We'll cut it out and feed her dogs with it.
- Poly.* Shall Iolaus bleed? Andromeda  
Be trailed through the city and upon the rocks,  
As the god wills, flung naked to his monsters?  
Cepheus and Cassiopea die?
- Cries* They shall!
- Meg.* Not one of them shall live.
- Poly.* Then come, my children.
- Dam.* But the beast? Will it not tear us on the road?
- Poly.* It will not hurt you who do Poseidon's will.  
I am your safeguard; I will march in front.
- Cries* To the palace, to the palace! We'll kill the Chal-  
deans, strangle Cepheus, tear the Queen to pieces.
- Poly.* In order, in good order, my sweet children.  
The mob surges out following Polydaon and  
Therops: only Damoetes, Chabrias, Baltis and Pasithea  
are left.
- Dam.* Come, Chabrias, we'll have sport.

*Chab.* My dead son calls me.

*He goes out in another direction.*

*Balt.* Pasithea, rise and come: you'll see her killed  
Who is the murderess of your daughter.

*Pas.* Let me  
Stay here and die.

*Dam.* Lift her up. Come, fool.  
*They go out, leading Pasithea.*

## SCENE 2

### *Cydone's Garden.*

*Cydone, Iolaus, Perseus.*

*Cyd.* Perseus, you did not turn him into stone?  
*Iol.* You cruelty! must one go petrifying  
One's fellows through the world? 'T would not be decent.  
*Cyd.* He would have been so harmless as a statue!  
*Pers.* The morning has broken over Syria and the sun  
Mounts royally into his azure kingdom.  
I feel a stir within me as if great things  
Were now in motion and clear-eyed Athene  
Urging me on to high and helpful deeds.  
There is a grandiose tumult in the air,  
A voice of gods and Titans locked in wrestle.

*Diomedes enters.*

*Diom.* Ah, prince!

*She bursts into tears.*

*Iol.* Diomedes, what calamity?

*Diom.* Flee, flee, from Syria, save thyself.

*Iol.* From Syria!

Am I alone in peril? Then I'll sit  
And wait.

*Diom.* Poseidon's monsters from the deep

• Arise to tear us for our sin. The people  
In fury, led by Polydaon, march  
Upon the palace, crying, "Slay the King,  
Butcher the Queen, and let Andromeda  
And Iolaus die." O my sweet playmate,

They swear they'll bind her naked to the rocks  
Of the sea-beach for the grim monster's jaws  
To tear and swallow.

*Iol.* My sword, my sword, Cydone!

*Diom.* Oh, go not to the fierce and bloody people!  
Praxilla stole me out, hiding my face  
In her grey mantle: I have outrun the wind  
To warn you. Had the wild mob recognized me,  
They would have torn me into countless pieces,  
And will you venture near whose name they join  
With death and cursings? Polydaon leads them.

*Cyd.* Had he been only stone!

*Iol.* My sword!

*Cydone gives him the sword. Perseus goes out to the cottage.*

*Diom.* You'll go?

What will you do alone against ten thousand?

*Iol.* To die is always easy. This canaille

I do not fear; it is a coward rabble.

*Diom.* But terror gives them fierceness: they are dangerous.

*Iol.* Keep Diomede for your service, love,  
If I am killed; escape hence with your mother  
To Gaza; she has gold: you may begin  
A life as fair there. Sometimes remember me.

*Cyd.* Diomede, will you comfort my dear mother?  
Tell her I am quite safe and will be back  
By nightfall. Hush! this in your ear, Diomede.  
Escape with her under the veil of night,  
For I shall not come back. Be you her daughter  
And comfort her sad lonely age, Diomede.

*Iol.* What do you mean, Cydone?

*Cyd.* Are you ready?

Let us be going.

*Iol.* Us, sweet lunatic?

*Cyd.* Often you've said that you and I are only one,  
I shall know now if you mean it.

*Iol.* You shall not give  
To the rude mob's ferocious violence  
The beautiful body I have kissed so often.  
You'll not obey me?

*Cyd.* No.  
*Iol.* Leave this you shall not.

*Cyd.* I do not know how you will stop me.  
*Iol.* Shrew!  
You shall be stopped by bonds. Here you'll remain  
Tied to a tree-trunk by your wilful wrists  
Till all is over.

*Perseus returns, armed.*  
*Cyd.* I'll bring the tree and all and follow you.  
*Iol.* Oh, will you, Hercules?

*Pers.* Forbid her not,  
My Iolaus; no tress of her shall fall.  
I have arisen and all your turbulent Syria  
Shall know me for the son of Zeus.

*Iol.* Perseus,  
Art thou indeed a god? What wilt thou do,  
One against a whole people? What way hast thou?  
*Pers.* This is no hour to speak or plan, but to act.  
A presence sits within my heart that sees  
Each moment's need and finds the road to meet it.  
Dread nothing; I am here to help and save.

*Iol.* I had almost forgotten; the might thou hast shown  
Is a sufficient warrant.

*Cyd.* I shall come back,  
Diomede.

*Pers.* My grip is firm on Herpe,  
Athene's ægis guards my wrist; herself  
The strong, omnipotent and tranquil goddess  
Governs my motions with her awful will.  
Have trust in me. Borne on my bright-winged sandals  
Invisibly I will attend your course



On the light breezes.

*He goes out followed by Iolaus and Cydone.*

*Diom.*

I am too tired to follow,

Too daunted with their mad-beast howls.

Here let me hide

Awaiting what event this war of gods

May bring to me and my sweet-hearted lady.

O my Andromeda! my little playmate!

*She goes out towards the cottage weeping.*

### SCENE 3

*A room commanding the outer Court of the Palace.*

*Nebassar, Praxilla.*

*Prax.* I have seen them from the roof; at least ten thousand  
March through the streets. Do you not hear their  
rumour,

A horrid hum as of unnumbered hornets  
That slowly nears us?

*Neb.* If they are so many,  
It will be hard to save the princess.

*Prax.* Save her!  
It is too late now to save anyone.

*Neb.* I fear so.

*Prax.* But never is too late to die  
As loyal servants for the lords whose bread  
We have eaten. At least we women of the household  
Will show the way to you Chaldeans.

*Neb.* We are soldiers,  
Praxilla, and need no guidance on a road  
We daily tread in prospect. I'll bring my guards.

*He goes out saluting Cassiopea who enters.*

*Cass.* Swift Diomedes must have reached by now,  
Praxilla.

*Prax.* I hope so, madam.

*She goes out to the inner apartments.*

*Cass.* Then Iolaus

Is safe. My sad heart has at least that comfort.  
O my Andromeda, my child Andromeda,  
Thou wouldst not let me save thee. Hadst thou too gone,

I would have smiled when their fierce fingers rent me.

*Cepheus enters.*

*Ceph.* The mob is nearing; all my Syrian guards  
Have fled; we cannot hope for safety now.

*Cass.* Then what is left but to set rapid fire  
To the rafters and prevent on friendly swords  
The rabble's outrage?

*Ceph.* Was it for such a fate  
Thou camest smiling from an emperor's palace,  
O Cassiopea, Cassiopea!

*Cass.* For me  
Grieve not.

*Ceph.* O Lady, princess of Chaldea,  
Pardon me who have brought thee to this doom.  
Yet I meant well and thought that I did wisely:  
But the gods wrest our careful policies  
To their own ends until we stand appalled  
Remembering what we meant to do and seeing  
What has been done.

*Cass.* With no half soul I came  
To share thy kingdom and thy joys; entirely  
I came, to take the evil also with thee.

*Ceph.* Is there no truth in our high-winged ideals?  
My rule was mild as spring, kind as the zephyr:  
It tempered justice with benevolence  
And offered pardon to the rebel and sinner;  
I showed mercy, the rare sign of gods and kings.  
In this too difficult world, this too brief life  
To serve the gods with virtue seemed the best.  
A nation's happiness was my only care:  
I made the people's love my throne's sure base  
And dreamed the way I chose true, great, divine.  
But the heavenly gods have other thoughts than man's;  
Their awful aims transcend our human sight.  
Another doom than I had hoped they gave.

- Cass.* A screened Necessity drives even the gods.  
Over human lives it strides to unseen ends;  
Our tragic failures are its stepping-stones.
- Ceph.* My father lived calm, just, pitiless, austere,  
As a stern god might sway a prostrate world:  
Admired and feared, he died a mighty king.  
My end is this abominable fate.
- Cass.* Another law than mercy's rules the earth.
- Ceph.* If I had listened to thee, O Cassiopea,  
Chance might have taken a fairer happier course.  
Always thou saidst to me, "The people's love  
Is a glimmer on quicksands in a gliding sea:  
Today they are with thee, to-morrow turn elsewhere.  
Wisdom, strength, policy alone are sure."  
I thought I better knew my Syrian folk.  
Is this not my well-loved people at my door,  
This tiger-hearted mob with bestial growl,  
This cry for blood to drink, this roar of hate?  
Always thou spok'st to me of the temple's power,  
A growing danger menacing the State,  
Its ambition's panther crouch and serpent pride  
And cruel craft in a priest's sombre face:  
I only saw the god and sacred priest.  
To priest and god I am thrown a sacrifice.  
The golden-mouthed orator of the market-place,  
Therops, thou bad'st me fear and quell or win  
Gaining his influence to my side. To me  
He seemed a voice and nothing but a voice.  
Too late I learn that human speech has power  
To change men's hearts and turn the stream of Time.  
Thy eyes could read in Phineus' scheming brain.  
I only thought to buy the strength of Tyre  
Offering my daughter as unwilling price.  
He has planned my fall and watches my agony.  
At every step I have been blind, have failed:

All was my error; all's lost and mine the fault.

*Cass.* Blame not thyself; what thou hadst to be, thou wert,  
And never yet came help from vain remorse.  
It is too late, too late. To die is left;  
Fate and the gods concede us nothing more.

*Ceph.* But strength to meet the doom is always ours.  
In royal robes and crowned we will show ourselves  
To our people and look in the eyes of death and fate.  
What is this armoured tramp?

*The Chaldean guards enter with Nebassar at  
their head.*

*Captains*

O King, we come

To die with thee, the soldiers of Chaldea;  
For all in Syria have abandoned thee.

*Ceph.* I thank you, soldiers.

*Cries outside*

Poseidon, great Poseidon! we are Poseidon's people.  
In, in, in! Kill the cuckold Cepheus, tear the harlot Cas-  
siopea.

*Ceph.* Voices of insolent outrage  
Proclaim the heartless rabble. On the steps  
Of our own palace we'll receive our subjects.

*Cass.* This, this becomes thee, monarch.

*Neb.* Soldiers, form

With serried points before these mighty sovereigns.

*The mob surges in, Therops and Perissus at  
their head, Polydaon a little behind, Damoetes, Morus and the  
rest. Praxilla and others of the household come running in.*

*Mob* On them! on them! Cut the Chaldeans to pieces!

*Ther.* Halt, people, halt: let there be no vain bloodshed.

*Cass.* Here is a tender-hearted demagogue!

*Ther.* Cepheus and Cassiopea, 'tis vain and heinous  
To dally with your fate; it will only make you  
More criminal before the majesty  
Of the offended people.

*Ceph.*

Majesty!

*Cass.*

An unwashed majesty and a wolf-throated!

*Ther.*

Insolent woman, to thee I speak not. Cepheus,—

*Ceph.*

Use humbler terms. I am thy King as yet.

*Ther.*

The last in Syria. Tell me, wilt thou give up  
Thy children to the altar, and thyself  
Surrender here with this Chaldean woman  
For mercy or judgment to the assembled will  
Of Syria.

*Cass.*

A tearing mercy, a howling judgment!

*Poly.*

Therops, why do you treat with these? Chaldeans!  
And you, Praxilla! women of the household!  
Bring out the abominable Andromeda  
Who brought the woe on Syria. Why should you vainly  
Be ripped and mangled?

*Cries of women*

Bring out Andromeda!

Bring out the harlot's daughter, bring her out!

*Cries of men*

Andromeda! Andromeda! Andromeda!  
Bring out this vile Andromeda to die!

*Andromeda enters from the inner Palace,  
followed by slave-girls entreating and detaining her.*

*Prax. (sorrowfully)*

Wilt thou be wilful even to the end?

*Cass.*

Alas, my child!

*Andr.*

Mother, weep not for me. Perhaps my death  
May save you; and 'tis good that I should die,  
Not these poor innocent people. Against me  
Their unjust god is wroth.

*Ceph.*

O my poor sunbeam!

*Andr. (advancing and showing herself to the people)*

O people who have loved me, you have called me  
And I am here.

*A fierce roar from the mob.*

*Ther.*

How she shrinks back appalled!

**Prax.** God! What a many-throated howl of demons!  
Their eyes glare death. These are not men and Syrians.  
The fierce Poseidon has possessed their breasts  
And breathed his awful blood-lust into all hearts  
Deafening the voice of reason, slaying pity:  
Poseidon's rage glares at us through these eyes,  
It is his ocean roar that fills our streets.

*Cries from the mob.*

**Balt.** Seize her! seize her! the child of wickedness!

*Voices of women*

Throw her to us! throw her to us! We will pick  
The veins out of her body one by one.

**Dam.** Throw her to us! We will burn her bit by bit.

**Mor.** Yes, cook her alive; no, Damoetes? Ho, ho, ho!

*Voices of men*

She has killed our sons and daughters: kill her! kill her.

*Voices of women*

She is the child of her wicked mother: kill her!

**Mob** Throw her to us! throw her to us!

**Meg.** We'll tear her here, and the furies shall tear her  
afterwards for ever in Hell.

**Ther.** Peace, people! she is not yours, she is Poseidon's.

**Andr.** Alas, why do you curse me? I am willing  
To die for you. If I had known this morn  
The monster's advent, I would have gone and met him  
While you yet slept, and saved your poor fair children  
Whose pangs have been my own. Had I died first,  
I should not then have suffered. O my loved people,  
You loved me too: when I went past your homes,  
You blessed me always; often your girls and mothers  
Would seize and bind me to their eager breasts  
With close imprisonment, kiss on their doorways  
And with a smiling soft reluctance leave.  
O do not curse me now! I can bear all,  
But not your curses.

- Per.* Alack, my pretty lady!  
What madness made you do it?
- Poly.* She has rewarded  
Your love by bringing death upon you, Syrians,  
And now she tries to melt you by her tears.
- Mob* Kill her, kill her! Cut the Chaldeans to pieces!  
We will have her!
- Pas.* O do not hurt her! She is like my child  
Whom the fierce monster tore.
- Meg.* Unnatural mother!  
Would you protect her who's cause your child was eaten?
- Pas.* Will killing her give back my child to me?
- Meg.* No, it will save the children of more mothers.
- Dam.* Gag up her puling mouth, the white-faced fool!
- Voices* Tear, tear Andromeda! Seize her and tear her!
- Women* Let us only get at her with our teeth and fingers!
- Neb.* Use swords, Chaldeans.
- Poly.* Order, my children, order!  
Chaldean, give us up Andromeda,  
And save your King and Queen.
- Neb.* What, wilt thou spare them?
- Cass.* Thou wilt not give my child to him, Nebassar?  
Thou dar'st not!
- Neb.* Queen, 'tis better one should die  
For all.
- Poly.* I swear to thee, I will protect them.
- Cass.* Trust not his oaths, his false and murderous oaths.
- Neb.* He is a priest: if we believe him, nothing  
We lose, something may gain.
- Meg.* What wilt thou do?  
The people do not like it. See, they mutter.
- Poly.* Let me have first their daughter in my grip,  
Be sure of the god's dearest victim. People,  
I am Poseidon's priest and your true friend.  
Leave all to me.



*Cries* Leave all to Polydaon! the good priest knows  
what he is doing.

*Poly.* Soldiers, give up the Princess.

*Neb.* Shall she be only given to Poseidon?  
Will you protect her from worse outrage?

*Poly.* I will.

*Prax.* Look! what a hideous triumph lights the eyes  
Of that fierce man. He glares at her with greed  
Like a wild beast of prey, and on his mouth  
There is a cruel unclean foam. Nebassar,  
O do not give her.

*Neb.* If there were any help!  
Go forth, O princess, O Andromeda.

*Cass.* My child! my child!

*Andr.* Give me one kiss, my mother.  
We shall yet meet, I think. My royal father,  
Andromeda farewells you, whom you loved  
And called your sunbeam. But the night receives me.

*Ceph.* Alas!

*Dam.* How long will these farewells endure?  
They are not needed: you shall meet presently  
If Death's angels can collect your tattered pieces.

*Cass.* O savage Syrians, let my curses brood  
Upon your land, an anguished mother's curse.  
May the Assyrian come and flay you living,  
Impale your sons, rip up your ravished daughters  
Before your agonising eyes and make you feel,  
Who drag my child from me to butcher her,  
The horror that you do. I curse you, Syrians.

*Andr.* Hush, mother, mother! what they demand is just.

*Neb.* Lead back the King and Queen into the Palace,  
Women. We too will from this sad surrender  
Remove our eyes.

*Cass.* I will not go. Let them tear her  
Before me: then surely Heaven will avenge me.

*Ceph.* Come, Cassiopea, come: our death's delayed  
By a few minutes. I will not see her slain.

*Cepheus and Praxilla go in, forcibly  
leading Cassiopea; they are followed by the slave-girls and  
then by Nebassar and the Chaldeans: Andromeda is left alone  
on the steps.*

*Cries of the mob surging forward*

Drag her, kill her, she is ours.

*Poly.* Therops and thou, Perissus, stand in front  
And keep the people off, or they will tear her,  
Defraud Poseidon.

*Per.* Cheer up, my princess, come!  
You shall be cleanly killed.

*Ther.* People of Syria,  
Rob not Poseidon of his own! 'tis not the way  
To turn his anger.

*Voices* Right, right! leave her to Poseidon: out with her to  
the sea-monster.

*Gard.* Therops is always right.

*Dam.* We will have her first: we will dress his banquet for  
him: none shall say us nay.

*Mor.* Good; we will show Poseidon some excellent cookery.  
Ho, ho, ho!

*Meg.* No, no, no! To the rocks with her! Strip her, the  
fine dainty princess, and hang her up in chains on the cliff-  
face.

*A woman*

Strip her! Off with her broidered robe and her  
silken tunic! Why should she wear such, when my daugh-  
ter carries only coarse woollen?

*A woman (shaking her fist)*

Curse the white child's face of thee: it has ruined  
Syria. Die, dog's daughter.

*Dam.* Is she to die only once who has killed so many of us?

I say, tie her to one of these pillars and flog her till she drops.

*Mor.* That's right, skin her with whips: peel her for the monster, ho, ho, ho!

*Balt.* Leave her: Hell's tortures shall make the account even.

*Poly.* In order, children: let all be done in order.

*Ther.* She droops like a bruised flower beneath their curses,  
And the tears lace her poor pale cheeks like frost  
Glittering on snowdrops. I am sorry now  
I had a hand in this.

*Andr.* You two have faces  
Less cruel than the others. I am willing  
To die,—oh, who would live to be so hated?  
But do not let them shame or torture me.

*Per.* Off! off! thick-brained dogs, loud-lunged asses!  
What do you do, yelping and braying here? Will you give  
a maimed meal to Poseidon's manhound? Do you know  
me not? Have you never heard of Perissus, never seen  
Perissus the butcher? I guard Poseidon's meat, and who-  
ever touches a morsel of it, I will make meat of him with  
my cleaver. I am Perissus, I am the butcher.

*Voices* It is Perissus, the good and wealthy butcher. He is  
right. To the rocks with her!

*Voices of women*

Bind her first: we will see her bound!

*Per.* In all that is rational, I will indulge you.  
Where is a cord?

*Cries* A cord, who has a cord?

*Dam.* Here is one, Perissus. 'Tis rough and strong and sure.

*Per.* Come, wear your bracelets.

*Andr.* O bind me not so hard!

You cut my wrists.

*She weeps.*

*Per.* You are too soft and tender.

There, dry your eyes,—but that, poor slip, you cannot.  
 See, I have tied you very lightly: say not  
 That this too hurts.

*Andr.* I thank you; you are kind.

*Per.* Kind! Why should I not be kind? Because I am a  
 butcher must I have no bowels? Courage, little Princess:  
 none shall hurt thee but thy sea-monster and he, I am sure,  
 will crunch thy little bones very tenderly. Never had  
 man-eater such sweet bones to crunch. Alack! but where  
 is the remedy?

*Poly.* Now take her to the beach and chain her there  
 Upon the rocks to bear her punishment.  
 Perissus, lead her forth! We'll follow you.

*Cries* Not I! not I!

*Dam.* You'd kill us, Polydaon!  
 Poseidon's anger walks by the sea-beaches.

*Poly.* The fierce sea-dragon will not hurt you, friends,  
 Who bring a victim to Poseidon's altar  
 Of the rude solemn beaches. I'll protect you.

*Cries* We'll go with Polydaon! with the good Polydaon!

*Poly.* Perissus, go before. We'll quickly come.

*Per.* Make way there or I'll make it with my cleaver.  
 Heart, little Princess! None shall touch thee. Heart!

*Perissus and others make their way out with Andromeda.*

*Poly.* Hem, people, hem the Palace in with myriads:  
 We'll pluck out Cepheus and proud Cassiopea.

*Cries* Kill Cepheus the cuckold, the tyrant! Tear the  
 harlot Cassiopea.

*Ther.* Is this thy sacred oath? Had not Nebassar  
 Thy compact, priest?

*Poly.* I swore not by Poseidon.  
 Wilt thou oppose me?

*Ther.* Thy perjury too much  
 Favours my private wishes. Yet would I not  
 Be thou with such a falsehood on my conscience.

- Poly.* Why, Therops, be thyself and thou shalt yet  
Be something great in Syria.
- Dam.* Where's Iolaus?  
Shall he not also die?
- Poly.* Too long forgotten!  
O that I should forget my dearest hatred!  
By this he has concealed himself or fled  
And I am baulked of what I chiefly cherished.
- Ther.* Oh, do them justice! the great house of Syria  
Were never cowards. The prince has been o'erwhelmed  
On his way hither with rash sword to rescue:  
So Aligattas tells, who came behind us.  
He's taken to the temple.
- Poly.* Heard you?
- Mob* Hurrah!
- Balt.* But what's the matter now with our good priest?  
His veins are all out and his face is blood-red!
- Dam.* This joy is too great for him.
- Poly.* I am a god,  
A god of blood and roaring victory.  
Oh, blood in rivers! His heart out of his breast,  
And his mother there to see it! and I to laugh  
At her, to laugh!
- Ther.* This is not sanity.
- Poly.* (*controlling himself with a great effort*)  
The sacrilegious house is blotted out  
Of Cepheus. Let not one head outlive their ending!  
Andromeda appoints the way to Hades  
Who was in crime the boldest, then her brother  
Yells on the altar: last Cepheus and his Queen—
- Cries* Tear her! let the Chaldean harlot die.
- Poly.* She shall be torn! but not till she has seen  
The remnants of the thing that was her daughter:  
Not till her sweet boy's heart has been plucked out

Under her staring eyes from his red bosom.  
 Till then she shall not die. But afterwards  
 Strew with her fragments every street of the city.  
*Cries* Hear, hear Poseidon's Viceroy, good Polydaon!  
*Meg.* In! in! cut off their few and foreign swordsmen.  
*Cries* In! in! let not a single Chaldean live.

*The mob rushes into the Palace; only  
 Therops and Polydaon remain.*

*Poly.* Go, Therops, take good care of Cassiopea,  
 Or she will die too mercifully soon.

*Ther. (aside)*  
 How shall we bear this grim and cruel beast  
 For monarch, when all's done! He is not human.

*He goes into the Palace.*

*Poly.* I have set Poseidon's rage in human hearts;  
 His black and awful Influence flows from me.  
 Thou art a mighty god, Poseidon, yet  
 And mightily thou hast avenged thyself.  
 The drama's nearly over. Now to ring out  
 The royal characters amid fierce howlings  
 And splendid, pitiless, crimson massacre,—  
 A great finale! Then, then I shall be King.

*(As he speaks, he gesticulates more wildly and his  
 madness gains upon him.)*

Thou luckless Phineus, wherefore didst thou leave  
 So fortunate a man for thy ally?  
 The world shall long recall King Polydaon.  
 I will paint Syria gloriously with blood.  
 Hundreds shall daily die to incarnadine  
 The streets of my city and my palace floors,  
 For I would walk in redness. I'll plant my gardens  
 With heads instead of lilacs. Hecatombs  
 Of men shall groan their hearts out for my pleasure  
 In crimson rivers. I'll not wait for shipwrecks.  
 Assyrian captives and my Syrian subjects,

Nobles and slaves, men, matrons, boys and virgins  
At matins and at vespers shall be slain  
To me in my magnificent high temple  
Beside my thunderous Ocean. I will possess  
Women each night, who the next day shall die,  
Encrimsoned richly for the eyes' delight.  
My heart throngs out in words! What moves within me?  
I am athirst, magnificently athirst,  
And for a red and godlike wine. Whence came  
The thirst on me? It was not here before.  
'Tis thou, 'tis thou, O grand and grim Poseidon,  
Hast made thy scarlet session in my soul  
And growest myself. I am not Polydaon,  
I am a god, a mighty dreadful god,  
The multitudinous mover in the sea,  
The shaker of the earth: I am Poseidon  
And I will walk in three tremendous paces  
Climbing the mountains with my clamorous waters  
And see my dogs eat up Andromeda,  
My enemy, and laugh in my loud billows.  
The clamour of battle roars within the Palace!  
I have created it, I am Poseidon.  
Sit'st thou, my elder brother, charioted  
In clouds? Look down, O brother Zeus, and see  
My actions! they merit thy immortal gaze.

*He goes into the Palace.*

#### SCENE 4

*On the road to the sea-shore.*

*Phineus and his Tyrians.*

*Phin.* A mighty power confounds our policies.  
Is't Heaven? is't Fate? What's left me, I will take.  
'Tis best to rescue young Andromeda  
From the wild mob and bear her home to Tyre.  
She, when the roar is over, will be left  
My claim to Syria's prostrate throne, which force,  
If not diplomacy shall re-erect  
And Tyre become the Syrian capital.  
I hear the trampling of the rascal mob.

*Cries outside*

Drag her more quickly! To the rocks! to the rocks!  
Glory to great Poseidon!

*Phin.* Tyrians, be ready.  
*Perissus and a number of Syrians enter leading 'Andromeda bound.*

*Syrians* To the rocks with her, to the rocks! bind her on the  
rocks.

*Phin.* Pause, rabble! Yield your prey to Tyrian Phineus.  
Lift up thy lovely head, Andromeda!  
For thou art saved.

*Per.* Who art thou with thy nose and thy fellows and thy  
spits?

*Phin.* Know'st thou me not? I am the royal Phineus.  
Yield up the Princess, fair Andromeda.



*Per.* Art thou the royal Phineus and is this long nose thy sceptre? I am Perissus, the butcher. Stand aside, royal Phineus, or I will chop thee royally with my cleaver.

*Andr.* What wilt thou with me, King of Tyre?

*Phin.* Sweet rose,

I come to save thee. I will carry thee,  
My bride, far from these savage Syrian tumults  
To reign in loyal Tyre. Thou art safe.

*Andr.* (*sorrowfully*)

Safe!

My father and my mother are not safe  
Nor Iolaus: nor is Syria safe.  
Will you protect my people, when the god,  
Not finding me, his preferable victim,  
Works his fierce will on these?

*Phin.* Thou car'st for them?

They have o'erwhelmed thee with foul insult, bound thee,  
Threatened thy lovely limbs with rascal outrage  
And dragged to murder!

*Andr.* But they are my people.

Perissus, lead me on. I will not go with him.

*Phin.* Thou strange and beautiful and marvellous child,  
Wilt thou or wilt thou not, by force I'll have thee.  
Golden enchantment! thou art too rare a thing  
For others to possess. Run, rascal rabble!  
On, Tyrians!

*Per.* Cleavers and axes to their spits!

*Andr.* King Phineus, pause! I swear I will prefer  
Death's grim embrace rather than be thy wife  
Abandoning my people. 'Tis a dead body  
Thou wilt rescue.

*Phin.* Is thy resolve unshakable?

*Andr.* It is.

*Phin.* Die then! To Death alone I yield thee.

*He goes out with his Tyrians.*

*Per.*                So then thou art off, royal Phineus! so thou hast  
                     evaporated, bold god of the Hittites! Thou hast saved thy  
                     royal nose from my cleaver.

*Syrians*    On to the rocks! Glory to great Poseidon.

*They go leading Andromeda.*

## SCENE 5

### *The Sea-shore.*

*Andromeda, dishevelled, bare-armed and unsandalled, stripped of all but a single light robe, stands on a wide low ledge under a rock jutting out from the cliff with the sea washing below her feet. She is chained to the rock behind her by her wrists and ankles, her arms stretched at full length against its side.*

*Polydaon, Perissus, Damoetes and a number of Syrians stand near on the great rocky platform projecting from the cliff of which the ledge is the extremity.*

*Poly.*    There meditate affronts to dire Poseidon.  
Rescue thyself, thou rescuer of victims!  
I am sorry that thy marriage, sweet Andromeda,  
So poorly is attended. I could have wished  
To have all Syria gazing at thy nuptials  
With thy rare Ocean bridegroom! Thy mother most  
Should have been here to see her lovely princess  
So meetly robed for bridal, with these ornaments  
Upon her pretty hands and feet. She has  
Affairs too pressing. We do some surgery  
Upon thy brother Iolaus' heart  
To draw the bad blood out and make it holy,  
And she must watch the skilful operation.  
Do not weep, fair one. Soon, be confident,  
They'll meet thee in that wide house where all are going.  
Think of these things until thy lover comes.  
Farewell.

*Per.* Art thou mad, priest Polydaon? How thou grinnest  
and drawest back thy black lips from thy white teeth in  
thy rapture! Hast thou gone clean mad, my skilful carver  
of hearts! art thou beside thyself, my ancient schoolmate  
and crony?

*Syrians* To the temple! To the temple!

*Poly.* Let one remain above the cliff.  
And watch the monster's advent and his going.  
Till I have news of dead Andromeda  
The sacrifice cannot begin. Who stays?

*Dam.* Not I!

*All* Nor I! nor I! nor I!

*Dam.* As well stay here with the girl and be torn with her!

*Per.* Do you quake, my brave shouters? must you curl  
your tails in between your manly legs? I will stay, priest,  
who fear neither dog nor dragon. I am Perissus, I am  
the butcher.

*Poly.* I'll not forget thy service, good Perissus.

*Per.* Will you then make me butcher-in-chief to your vice-  
roy in Damascus, and shall I cut my joints under the patro-  
nage of King Polydaon? To the temple, Syrian heroes! I  
will go and cross my legs on the cliff-top.

*They go. Andromeda is left alone.*

*Curtain.*

## ACT V

### SCENE 1

*The sea-shore. Andromeda chained to the cliff.*

*Andr.* O iron-throated vast unpitying sea,  
Whose borders touch my feet with their cold kisses  
As if they loved me! yet from thee my death  
Will soon arise, and in some monstrous form  
To tear my heart with horror before my body.  
I am alone with thee on this wild beach  
Filled with the echo of thy roaring waters.  
My fellowmen have cast me out: they have bound me  
Upon thy rocks to die. These cruel chains  
Weary the arms they keep held stiffly out  
Against the rough cold jagged stones. My bosom  
Hardly contains its thronging sobs; my heart  
Is torn with misery: for by my act  
My father and my mother are doomed to death,  
My kind dear brother, my sweet Iolaus,  
Will cruelly be slaughtered; by my act  
A kingdom ends in miserable ruin.  
I thought to save two fellowmen: I have slain  
A hundred by their rescue. I have failed  
In all I did and die accursed and hated.  
I die alone and miserably, no heart  
To pity me: only your hostile waves  
Are listening to my sobs and laughing hoarsely  
With cruel pleasure. Heaven looks coldly on.  
Yet I repent not. O thou dreadful god!  
Yes, thou art dreadful and most mighty; perhaps  
This world will always be a world of blood

And smiling cruelty, thou its fit sovereign.  
 But I have done what my own heart required of me,  
 And I repent not. Even if after death  
 Eternal pain and punishment await me  
 And gods and men pursue me with their hate,  
 I have been true to myself and to my heart,  
 I have been true to the love it bore for men,  
 And I repent not.

*She is silent for awhile.*

Alas! is there no pity for me? Is there  
 No kind bright sword to save me in all this world?  
 Heaven with its cold unpitying azure roofs me,  
 And the hard savage rocks surround: the deaf  
 And violent Ocean roars about my feet,  
 And all is stony, all is cold and cruel.  
 Yet I had dreamed of other powers. Where art thou,  
 O beautiful still face amid the lightnings,  
 Athene? Does a mother leave her child?  
 And thou, bright stranger, wert thou only a dream?  
 Wilt thou not come down glorious from thy sun,  
 And cleave my chains, and lift me in thy arms  
 To safety? I will not die! I am too young,  
 And life was recently so beautiful.  
 It is too hard, too hard a fate to bear.

*She is silent, weeping. Cydone enters:  
 she comes and sits down at Andromeda's feet.*

*Cyd.* How beautiful she is, how beautiful!  
 Her tears bathe all her bosom. O cruel Syrians!

*Andr.* What gentle touch is on my feet? Who art thou?

*Cyd.* I am Cydone. Iolaus loves me.

*Andr.* My brother! lives he yet?

*Cyd.* He lives, dear sweetness,  
 And sent me to you.

*Andr. (joyfully)*

It was a cruel lie!

He's free?

*Cyd.* No, bound and in the temple. Weep not.

*Andr.* Alas! And you have left him there alone?

*Cyd.* The gods are with him, sister. In a few hours  
We shall be all together and released  
From these swift perils.

*Andr.* Together and released!

Oh yes, in death.

*Cyd.* I bid you hope. O child,  
How beautiful you are, how beautiful,  
Iolaus' sister! This one white slight garment  
Fluttering about you in the ocean winds,  
You look like some wind-goddess chained in play  
By frolic sisters on the wild sea-beaches.  
I think all this has happened, little sister,  
Just that the gods might have for one brief hour  
You for a radiant vision of childish beauty  
Exposed against this wild stupendous background.

*Andr.* You make me smile in spite of all my grief.  
Did you not bid me hope, Cydone?

*Cyd.* And now  
I bid you trust: for you are saved.

*Andr.* I am.  
I feel it now.

*Cyd.* Your name's Andromeda?

*Andr.* Iolaus calls me so.

*Cyd.* I think he cheats me.  
You are Iolaus changed into a girl.  
Come, I will kiss you dumb for cheating me  
With changes of yourself.

*Kisses her.*

If I could have  
My Iolaus always chained like this  
To do my pleasure with, I would so plague him!  
For he abuses me and calls me shrew,  
Monster and vixen and names unbearable,

Because he's strong and knows I cannot beat him.  
*Andr.* The world is changed about me.

*Cyd.* Heaven's above.

Look up and see it.

*Andr.* There is a golden cloud

Moving towards me.

*Cyd.* It is Perseus. Sweetheart,

I go to Iolaus in the temple,—

I mean your other fair boy-self. Kiss me,

O sweet girl-Iolaus, and fear nothing.

*She goes out over the rocks.*

*Andr.* I shall be saved! What is this sudden trouble

That lifts the bosom of the tossing deep,

Hurling the waves against my knees? Save me!

Where art thou gone, Cydone? What huge head

Raises itself on the affrighted seas?

Where art thou, O my saviour? Come! His eyes

Glare up at me from the grey Ocean trough

Hideous with brutish longing. Like great sharp rocks

His teeth are in a bottomless dim chasm.

*She closes her eyes in terror. Perseus enters.*

*Pers.* Look up, O sunny-curved Andromeda!

Perseus, the son of Danaë, is with thee

To whom thou now belongest. Fear no more

Sea-monsters nor the iron-souled Poseidon,

Nor the more monstrous flinty-hearted rabble

Who bound thee here. This huge and grisly enemy

That rises from the flood, need not affright thee.

Thou art as safe as if thy mother's arms

Contained thee in thy brilliant guarded palace

When all was calm, O white Andromeda!

Lift up thy eyes' long curtains: aid the azure

With thy regards, O sunshine. Look at me

And see thy safety.



*Andr.* O thou hast come to me!

It was not only a radiant face I dreamed of.

*Pers.* In time to save thee, my Andromeda,  
Sole jewel of the world. I go to meet  
Thy enemy, confronting grim Poseidon.

*Andr.* O touch me ere you go that I may feel  
You are real.

*Pers.* Let my kiss, sweet doubting dreamer,  
Convince thee. Now I dart like a swift hawk  
Upon my prey and smite betwixt the billows.  
Watch how I fight for thee. I will come soon  
To gather thee into my grasp, my prize  
Of great adventure.

*He goes out.*

*Andr.* The music of his name  
Was in my brain just now. What must I call thee?  
Perseus, the son of Danaë! Perseus!  
Perseus, Athene's sword! Perseus, my sungod!  
O human god of glad Andromeda!  
Forgive, Athene, my lack of faith. Thou art!  
How like a sudden eagle he has swooped  
Upon the terror, that lifts itself alarmed,  
Swings its huge length along the far-ridged billows  
And upwards yawns its rage. O great Athene!  
It belches fiery breath against my Perseus  
And lashes Ocean in his face. The sea  
Is tossed upon itself and its huge bottoms  
Catch chinks of unaccustomed day. But the ægis  
Of Perseus hurls the flame-commingled flood  
Back in the dragon's eyes: it shoots its lightnings  
Into the horizon like fire-trailing arrows.  
The world surprised with light gazes dismayed  
Upon the sea-surrounded war, ringed in  
With foam and flying tumult. O glorious sight,  
Too swift and terrible for human eyes!

I will pray rather. Virgin, beautiful  
 Athene, virgin-mother of my soul!  
 I cannot lift my hands to thee, they are chained  
 To the wild cliff, but lift my heart instead,  
 Virgin, assist thy hero in the fight.  
 Descend, armipotent maiden, child of Zeus,  
 Shoot from his god-like brain the strength of will  
 That conquers evil: in one victorious stroke  
 Collecting hurl it on the grisly foe.  
 Thou, thou art sword and shield, and thou the force  
 That uses shield and sword, virgin Athene.  
 The tumult ceases and the floods subside.  
 I dare not look. And yet I will. O death,  
 Thou tосsest there inertly on the flood,  
 A floating mountain. Perseus comes to me  
 Touching the waves with airy-sandalled feet,  
 Bright and victorious.

*Perseus returns.*

*Pers.* The grisly beast is slain that was thy terror,  
 And thou may'st sun the world with smiles again,  
 Andromeda.

*Andr.* Thou hast delivered me, O Perseus, Perseus,  
 My sovereign.

*Pers.* Girl, I take into my arms  
 My own that I have won and with these kisses  
 Seal to me happy head and smiling eyes,  
 Bright lips and all of thee, thou sunny Syrian.  
 All thy white body is a hero's guerdon.

*Andr.* Perseus!

*Pers.* Sweetly thou tak'st my eager kisses  
 With lovely smiles and glorious blushing cheeks  
 Rejoicing in their shame.

*Andr.* I am chained, Perseus,  
 And cannot help myself.

- Pers.* O smile of sweetness!  
I will unravel these unworthy bonds  
And rid thee of the cold excuse.
- Andr.* My chains?  
They do not hurt me now, and I would wear them  
A hundred times for such a happy rescue.
- Pers.* Thou tremblest yet!
- Andr.* Some sweet and sudden fear  
O'ertakes me! O what is it? I dare not look  
Into thy radiant eyes.
- Pers.* Sweet tremors, grow  
Upon her. Never shall harsher fears again  
O'ertake your rosy limbs, in Perseus' keeping.  
How fair thou art, my prize Andromeda!  
O sweet chained body, chained to love not death,  
That with a happy passiveness endures  
My touch, once more, once more. And now fall down  
Clashing into the deep, you senseless irons,  
That took a place my kisses only merit.  
Princess of Syria, child of imperial Cepheus,  
Step forward free.
- Andr.* (*falling at his feet and embracing them*)  
O Perseus, O my saviour!  
Wilt thou not also save those dear to me  
And make this life thou givest worth the giving?  
My father, mother, brother, all I love,  
Lie for my fault shuddering beneath the knife.
- Pers.* It was a glorious fault, Andromeda.  
Tremble not for thy loved ones. Wilt thou trust  
Thy cherished body in my arms to bear  
Upward, surprising Heaven with thy beauty?  
Or wilt thou fear to see the blue wide Ocean  
Between thy unpropped feet, fathoms below?
- Andr.* With you I fear not.

*Pers.*

Cling to me then, sweet burden,

And we will meet our enemies together.

*He puts his arms round her to lift her and the curtain falls.*

## SCENE 2

### *The Temple of Poseidon.*

*Polydaon, Therops, Dercetes, Cydone, Damoetes and a great number of Syrians, men and women. Iolaus stands bound, a little to the side: Cepheus and Cassiopea surrounded by armed men.*

*Poly.* Cepheus and Cassiopea, man and woman,  
Not sovereigns now, you see what end they have  
Who war upon the gods.

*Cass.* To see thy end  
My eyes wait only.

*Poly.* Let them see something likelier,  
Is't not thy son who wears those cords and that  
An altar? What! the eyes are drowned in tears  
Where fire was once so ready? Where is thy pride,  
O Cassiopea?

*Cass.* There are other gods  
Than thy Poseidon. They shall punish thee.

*Poly.* If thou knew'st who I am, which is most secret,  
Thou wouldst not utter vain and foolish wishes.  
When thou art slain, I will reveal myself.

*Cass.* Thou hast revealed thyself for what thou art  
Already, a madman and inhuman monster.

*Ceph.* My queen, refrain from words.

*Dam.* Perissus comes.

*Cass.* Ah God!

*Ther.* Look, the Queen swoons! Oh, look to her!  
*Perissus enters.*

- Poly.* Yes, raise her up, bring back her senses: now  
I would not have them clouded. News, Perissus!  
Thy face is troubled and thy eyes stare wildly.
- Per.* Stare, do they? They may stare, for they have cause.  
You too will stare soon, Viceroy Polydaon.
- Ther.* What rare thing happened? The heavens were troubled  
strangely,  
Although their rifts were blue. What hast thou seen?
- Per.* I have seen hell and heaven at grips together.
- Poly.* What do I care for hell or heaven? Your news!  
Did the sea-monster come and eat and go?
- Per.* He came but went not.
- Poly.* Was not the maiden seized?
- Per.* Ay, was she, in a close and mighty grasp.
- Poly.* By the sea-beast?
- Per.* 'Tis said we all are animals;  
Then so was he: but 't was a glorious beast.
- Poly.* And was she quite devoured?
- Per.* Why, in a manner,—  
If kisses eat.
- Poly.* Ha! ha! such soft caresses  
May all my enemies have. She was not torn?  
What, was she taken whole and quite engulfed?
- Per.* Something like that.
- Poly.* You speak with difficult slowness  
And strangely. Where's your blithe robustness gone,  
Perissus?
- Per.* Coming, with the beast. He lifted her  
Mightily from the cliff to heaven.
- Poly.* So, Queen,  
Nothing is left thee of Andromeda.
- Per.* Why, something yet, a sweet and handsome piece.
- Poly.* You should have brought it here, my merry butcher,  
That remnant of her daughter.
- Per.* It is coming.

*Poly.* Ho, ho! then you shall see your daughter, queen.

*Derc.* This is a horrid and inhuman laughter.

Restrain thy humour, priest! My sword's uneasy.

*Ther.* It is a scandal in Poseidon's temple.

*Poly.* Do you oppose me?

(*to Therops*)

Wilt thou resist Poseidon,

Misguided mortal?

*Derc.* He glares and his mouth works,

This is a maniac. Does a madman rule us?

*Ther.* There has been much of violence and mad fierceness,

Such as in tumults may be pardoned. Now

It is the tranquil hour of victory

When decency should reign and mercy too.

What do we gain by torturing this poor Queen

And most unhappy King?

*Poly.* Hear him, O people!

He favours great Poseidon's enemies.

Therops turns traitor.

*Dam.* He rails at the good priest.

*Cries* Therops a traitor!

*Meg.* Therops, thou favour kings?

Thou traitor to Poseidon and his people?

*Gard.* I say, hear Therops. He is always right,

Our Therops; he has brains.

*Cries* Hear Therops, Therops!

*Ther.* Let them be punished, but with exile only.

I am no traitor. I worked for you, O people,

When this false priest was with the King of Tyre

Plotting to lay on you a foreign chain.

*Cries* Is it so? Is it the truth? Speak, Polydaon.

*Poly.* Must I defend myself? Was it not I

Who led you on to victory and turned

The wrath of dire Poseidon? If you doubt me,

Be then the sacrifice forbidden; let Cepheus

- And Cassiopea reign; but when the dogs  
Of grim Poseidon howl again behind you,  
Call not to me for help. I will not always pardon.
- Cries* Polydaon, Polydaon, Poseidon's mighty Viceroy!  
Kill Therops! Iolaus upon the altar!
- Poly.* Now you are wise again. Leave this Therops.  
Bring Iolaus to the altar here.  
Lay bare his bosom for the knife.
- Ther.* Dercetes,  
Shall this be allowed?
- Derc.* We must not dare offend,  
Poseidon. But when it's over, I'll break in  
With all my faithful spears and save the King  
And Cassiopea. Therops, 'twould be a nightmare,  
The rule of that fierce priest and fiercer rabble.
- Ther.* With all the better sort I will support thee.
- Per.* Therops, my crowd-compeller, my eloquent Zeus of  
the market-place, I know thy heart is big with the sweet  
passion of repentance, but let it not burst into action yet.  
Keep thy fleet sharp spears at rest, Dercetes. There are  
times, my little captain, and there is a season. Watch and  
wait. The gods are at work and Iolaus shall not die.
- Poly.* We only wait until our mighty wrath  
Is shown you in the mangled worst offender  
Against our godhead. Then, O Cassiopea,  
I'll watch thy eyes.
- Per.* Behold her, Polydaon.  
*Perseus and Andromeda enter the temple.*
- Cries* Andromeda! Andromeda! who has unchained her?  
It is Andromeda!
- Ceph.* It is the spirit of Andromeda.
- Ther.* Shadows were ne'er so bright, had never smile  
So sunny! she is given back to earth:  
It is the radiant wingèd Hermes brings her.
- Derc.* 'Tis he who baffled us upon the beach.



I see the gods are busy in our Syria.

*Andromeda runs to Cassiopea and clasps and kisses her knees: the soldiers making way for her.*

*Cass. (taking Andromeda's face between her hands)*

O my sweet child, thou livest!

*Andr.* Mother, mother!

I live and see the light and grief is ended.

*Cass. (lifting Andromeda into her arms)*

I hold thee living on my bosom. What grief  
Can happen now?

*Ceph.* Andromeda, my daughter!

*Poly. (awaking from his amazement)*

Confusions! Butcher, thou hast betrayed me. Seize  
them!

They shall all die upon my mighty altar.

Seize them!

*Pers. (confronting him)*

Priest of Poseidon and of death,

Three days thou gav'st me: it is but the second.

I am here: Dost thou require the sacrifice?

*Poly.* Art thou a god? I am a greater, dreadfuller.

Tremble and go from me: I need thee not.

*Pers.* Expect thy punishment. Syrians, behold me,  
The victim snatched from grim Poseidon's altar.

My sword has rescued sweet Andromeda  
And slain the monster of the deep. You asked  
For victims? I am here. Whose knife is ready?  
Let him approach.

*Ther.* Who art thou, mighty hero?

Declare unto this people thy renown  
And thy unequalled actions. What high godhead  
Befriends thee in battle?

*Pers.* Syrians, I am Perseus,

The mighty son of Zeus and Danaë.

The blood of gods is in my veins, the strength

Of gods is in my arm: Athene helps me.  
 Behold her ægis, which if I uncover  
 Will blind you with its lightnings; and this sword  
 Is Herpe, which can pierce the earth and Hades.  
 What I have done, is by Athene's strength.  
 Borne from Seriphos through pellucid air  
 Upon these wingèd shoes, in the far west  
 I have traversed unknown lands and nameless continents  
 And seas where never came the plash of human oars.  
 On torrid coasts burned by the desert wind  
 I have seen great Atlas buttressing the sky,  
 His giant head companion of the stars,  
 And changed him into a hill; the northern snows  
 Illimitable I have trod, where Nature  
 Is awed to silence, chilled to rigid whiteness;  
 I have entered caverns dim where death was born:  
 And I have taken from the dim-dwelling Graiæ  
 Their wondrous eye that sees the past and future:  
 And I have slain the Gorgon, dire Medusa,  
 Her head that turns the living man to stone  
 Locking into my wallet: last, today,  
 In Syria by the loud Aegean surges  
 I have done this deed that men shall ever speak of.  
 Ascending with winged feet the clamorous air  
 I have cloven Poseidon's monster whose rock-teeth  
 And fiery mouth swallowed your sons and daughters.  
 Where now has gone the sea-god's giant stride  
 That filled with heads of foam your fruitful fields?  
 I have dashed back the leaping angry waters;  
 His Ocean-force has yielded to a mortal.  
 • Even while I speak, the world has changed around you.  
 Syrians, the earth is calm, the heavens smile;  
 A mighty silence listens on the sea.  
 All this I have done, and yet not I, but one greater.  
 Such is Athene's might and theirs who serve her.

You know me now, O Syrians, and my strength  
I have concealed not. Let no man hereafter  
Complain that I deceived him to his doom.  
Speak now. Which of you all demands a victim?

*He pauses: there is silence.*

What, you have howled and maddened, bound sweet  
women

For slaughter, roared to have the hearts of princes,  
And are you silent now? Who is for victims?  
Who sacrifices Perseus?

*Ther.* Speak! Is there  
A fool so death-devoted?

*Pers.* Claims any man victims?

*Cries* There's none, great Perseus.

*Pers.* Then, I here release  
Andromeda and Iolaus, Syrians,  
From the death-doom: to Cepheus give his crown  
Once more. Does any man gainsay my action?  
Would any rule in Syria?

*Cries.* None, mighty Perseus.

*Pers.* Iolaus, sweet friend, my work is finished.

*He severs his bonds.*

*Iol.* O mighty father, suffer me for thee  
To take thy crown from the unworthy soil  
Where rude hands tumbled it. 'Twill now sit steady.  
Dercetes, art thou loyal once again?

*Derc.* For ever.

*Iol.* Therops!

*Ther.* I have abjured rebellion.

*Iol.* Lead then my royal parents to their home  
With martial pomp and music. And let the people  
Cover their foul revolt with meek obedience.  
One guiltiest head shall pay your forfeit: the rest,  
Since terror and religious frenzy moved

To mutiny, not their sober wills, shall all  
Be pardoned.

*Cries* Iolaus! Iolaus!

Long live the Syrian, noble Iolaus!  
*Iol.* Andromeda, and thou, my sweet Cydone,  
Go with them.

*Ceph.* I approve thy sentence, son.

*Dercetes and his soldiers, Therops and the Syrians  
leave the temple conducting Cepheus and Cassiopea,  
Andromeda and Cydone.*

*Iol.* Now, Polydaon,—

*Poly.* I have seen all and laughed.

Iolaus, and thou, O Argive Perseus,  
You know not who I am. I have endured  
Your foolish transient triumph that you might feel  
My punishments more bitter-terrible.  
'Tis time, 'tis time. I will reveal myself.  
Your horror-staring eyes shall know me, princes,  
When I hurl death and Ocean on your heads.

*Pers.* The man is frantic.

*Iol.* Defeat has turned him mad.

*Per.* I have seen this coming on him for a season and a  
half. He was a fox at first, but this tumult gave him  
claws and muscles and he turned tiger. This is the end.  
What, Polydaon! Good cheer, priest! Roll not thy eyes:  
I am thy friend Perissus, I am thy old loving school-mate;  
are we not now fellow-craftsmen, priest and butcher?

*Poly.* Do you not see? I wave my sapphire locks  
And earth is quaking. Quake, earth! rise, my great  
Ocean!  
Earth, shake my foemen from thy back! clasp, sea,  
And kiss them dead, thou huge voluptuary.  
Come barking from your stables, my sweet monsters:  
With blood-stained fangs and fiery mouths avenge me  
Mocking their victory. Thou, brother Zeus,

Rain curses from thy skies. What, is all silent?  
I'll tear thee, Ocean, into watery bits  
And strip thy oozy basal rocks quite naked  
If thou obey me not.

*Iol. (advancing)*

He must be seized.

And bound.

*Pers.*

Pause. See, he foams and clutches!

*Polydaon falls to the ground.*

He

Is sentenced.

*Per.*

Polydaon, old crony, grows thy soul too great within  
thee? dost thou kick the unworthy earth and hit out with  
thy noble fists at Heaven?

*Iol.*

It was a fit, it is over. He lies back white  
And shaking.

*Poly.*

*(As he speaks, his utterance is hacked by pauses of  
silence. He seems unconscious of those around him, his  
being is withdrawing from the body and he lives only in  
an inner consciousness and its vision.)*

I was Poseidon but this moment.

Now he departs from me and leaves me feeble:

I have become a dull and puny mortals.

*(half rising)*

It was not I but thou who feared'st, god.  
I would have spoken, but thou wert chilled and stone.  
What feared'st thou or whom? Wert thou alarmed  
By the godhead lurking in man's secret soul  
Or deity greater than thy own appalled thee? . . . .  
Forgive, forgive! pass not away from me.  
Thy power is now my breath and I shall perish  
If thou withdraw. . . . . He stands beside me still  
Shaking his gloomy locks and glares at me  
Saying it was my sin and false ambition

Undid him. Was I not fearless as thou bad'st me?  
 Ah, he has gone into invisible  
 Vast silences! . . . . . Whose, whose is this bright glory?  
 One stands now in his place and looks at me.  
 Imperious is his calm Olympian brow,  
 The sea's blue unfathomed depths gaze from his eyes,  
 Wide sea-blue locks crown his majestic shape:  
 A mystic trident arms his tranquil might.  
 As one new-born to himself and to the world  
 He turns from me with the surges in his stride  
 To seek his Ocean empire. Earth bows down  
 Trembling with awe of his unbearable steps,  
 Heaven is the mirror of his purple greatness. . . .  
 But whose was that dimmer and tremendous image? . . .  
 A horror of darkness is around me still,  
 But the joy and might have gone out of my breast  
 And left me mortal, a poor human thing  
 With whom death and the fates can do their will. . . .  
 But his presence yet is with me, near to me. . . .  
 Was I not something more than earthly man? . . .

*(with a cry)*

It was myself, the shadow, the hostile god!  
 I am abandoned to my evil self.  
 That was the darkness! . . . But there was something  
more

Insistent, dreadful, other than myself!  
 Whoever thou art, spare me. . . . I am gone, I am taken.  
 In his tremendous clutch he bears me off  
 Into thick cloud; I see black Hell, the knives  
 Fire-pointed touch my breast. Spare me, Poseidon. . . .  
 Save me, O brilliant God, forgive and save.

*He falls back dead.*

*Pers.*

Who then can save a man from his own self?

*lol.*

He is ended, his own evil has destroyed him.

*Pers.*

This man for a few hours became the vessel

Of an occult and formidable Force  
 And through his form it did fierce terrible things  
 Unhuman: but his small and gloomy mind  
 And impure dark heart could not contain the Force.  
 It turned in him to madness and demoniac  
 Huge longings. Then the Power withdrew from him  
 Leaving the broken incapable instrument,  
 And all its might was spilt from his body. Better  
 To be a common man mid common men  
 And live an unaspiring mortal life  
 Than call into oneself a Titan strength  
 Too dire and mighty for its human frame,  
 That only afflicts the oppressed astonished world,  
 Then breaks its user.

*Iol.* But best to be Heaven's child.

Only the sons of gods can harbour gods.

*Per.* Art thou then gone, Polydaon? My monarch of  
 breast-hackers, this was an evil ending. My heart is full  
 of woe for thee, my fellow-butcher.

*Iol.* The gods have punished him for his offences,  
 Ambition and a hideous cruelty  
 Ingenious in mere horror.

*Pers.* Burn him with rites,  
 If that may help his soul by dark Cocytus.  
 But let us go and end these strange upheavals:  
 Call Cireas from his hiding for reward,  
 Tyrnaus too, and Smerdas from his prison,  
 Fair Diomedes from Cydone's house.  
 Humble or high, let all have their deserts  
 Who partners were or causes of our troubles.

*Iol.* There's Phineus will ask reasons.

*Pers.* He shall be satisfied.

*Per.* He cannot be satisfied, his nose is too long; it will  
 not listen to reason, for it thinks all the reason and policy  
 in the world are shut up in the small brain to which it is

a long hooked outlet.

*Pers.* Perissus, come with me: for thou wert kind  
To my fair sweetness; it shall be remembered.

*Per.* There was nothing astonishing in that: I am as  
chock-full with natural kindness as a rabbit is with guts;  
I have bowels, great Perseus. For am I not Perissus? am  
I not the butcher?

*They go out: the curtain falls.*



### SCENE 3

*The audience chamber of the Palace.*

*Cepheus, Cassiopea, Andromeda, Cydone, Praxilla, Medes.*

*Ceph.* A sudden ending to our sudden evils  
Propitious gods have given us, Cassiopea.  
Pursued by panic the Assyrian flees  
Abandoning our borders.

*Cass.* And I have got  
My children's faces back upon my bosom.  
What gratitude can ever recompense  
That godlike youth whose swift and glorious rescue  
Lifted us out of Hell so radiantly?

*Cyd.* He has taken his payment in one small white coin  
Mounted with gold; and more he will not ask for.

*Cass.* Your name's Cydone, child? your face is strange.  
You are not of the slave-girls.

*Cyd.* O I am!  
Iolaus' slave-girl, though he calls me sometimes  
His queen: but that is only to beguile me.

*Andr.* Oh, mother, you must know my sweet Cydone.  
I shall think you love me little if you do not  
Take her into your bosom: for she alone,  
When I was lonely with my breaking heart,  
Came to me with sweet haste and comforted  
My soul with kisses,—yes, even when the terror  
Was rising from the sea, surrounded me  
With her light lovely babble, till I felt  
Sorrow was not in the same world as she.

And but for her I might have died of grief  
Ere rescue came.

*Cass.* What wilt thou ask of me,  
Even to a crown, Cydone? thou shalt have it.

*Cyd.* Nothing, unless 'tis leave to stand before you  
And be for ever Iolaus' slave-girl  
Unhidden.

*Cass.* Thou shalt be more than that, my daughter.

*Cyd.* I have two mothers: a double Iolaus  
I had already. O you girl-Iolaus,  
You shall not marry Perseus: you are mine now.  
Oh, if you have learned to blush!

*Andr.* (*stopping her mouth*)

Hush, you mad babbler!  
Or I will smother your wild mouth with mine.

*Perseus and Iolaus enter.*

*Ceph.* O welcome, brilliant victor mighty Perseus!  
Saviour of Syria, angel of the gods,  
Kind was the fate that led thee to our shores.

*Cass.* (*embracing Iolaus*)  
Iolaus, Iolaus, my son!  
My golden-haired delight they would have murdered!  
Perseus, hast thou a mother?

*Pers.* One like thee  
In love, O Queen, though less in royalty.

*Cass.* What can I give thee then who hast the world  
To move in, thy courage and thy radiant beauty,  
And a tender mother? Yet take my blessing, Perseus,  
To help thee: for the mightiest strengths are broken  
And divine favour lasts not long, but blessings  
Of those thou helpest with thy kindly strength  
Upon life's rugged way, can never fail thee.

*Ceph.* And what shall I give, seed of bright Olympus?  
Wilt thou have half my kingdom, Argive Perseus?

*Pers.* Thy kingdom falls by right to Iolaus  
In whom I shall enjoy it. One gift thou hadst  
I might have coveted, but she is mine,  
O monarch: I have taken her from death  
For my possession.

*Ceph.* My sunny Andromeda!  
But there's the Tyrian: yet he gave her up  
To death and cannot now reclaim her.

*Iol.* Father,  
The Babylonian merchants wait, and Ciresas:  
The people's leaders and thy army's captains  
Are eager to renew an interrupted  
Obedience.

*Ceph.* Admit them all to me: Go, Medes.  
*As Medes goes out, Diomedes enters.*

*Andr.* Diomedes! playmate! you too have come quite safe  
Out of the storm. I thought we both must founder.

*Diom.* Oh, yes, and now you'll marry Perseus, leave me  
No other playmate than Praxilla's whippings  
To keep me lively!

*Andr.* Therefore 'tis you look  
So discontent and sullen? Clear your face,  
I'll drag you to the world's far end with me,  
And take in my own hands Praxilla's duty.  
Will that please you?

*Diom.* As if your little hand could hurt!  
I'm off, Praxilla, to pick scarlet berries  
In Argolis and hear the seabirds' cries  
And Ocean singing to the Cyclades.  
I'll buy you brand new leather for a relic  
To whip the memory of me with sometimes,  
Praxilla.

*Prax.* You shall taste it then before you go.  
You'll make a fine fair couple of wilfulnesses.  
I pity Perseus.

- Andr.* You are well rid of us,  
My poor Praxilla.
- Prax.* Princess, little Princess,  
My hands will be lighter, but my heart too heavy.  
*Therops and Dercetes enter with the  
Captains of the army, Cireas, Tyrnaus, and Smerdas.*
- All* Hail, you restored high royalties of Syria.
- Ther.* O King, accept us, be the past forgotten.
- Ceph.* It is forgotten, Therops. Welcome, Dercetes.  
Thy friend Nebassar is asleep. He has done  
His service for the day and taken payment.
- Cass.* His blood is a deep stain on Syria's bosom.
- Derc.* On us the stain lies, queen: but we will drown it  
In native streams, when we go forth to scourge  
The Assyrian in his home.
- Ther.* Death for one's King  
Only less noble is than for one's country.  
This foreign soldier taught us that home lesson.
- Cass.* Therops, there are kings still in Syria?
- Ther.* Great Queen,  
Remember not my sins.
- Cass.* They are buried deep,  
Thy bold rebellion,—even thy cruel slanders,  
If only thou wilt serve me as my friend  
True to thy people in me. Will this be hard for thee?
- Ther.* O noble lady, you pay wrongs with favours!  
I am yours for ever, I and all this people.
- Cir. (to Diomede)*  
This it is to be an orator! We shall hear him har-  
anguing the people next market-day on fidelity to princes  
and the divine right of queens to have favourites.
- Iol.* Cireas, old bribe-taker, art thou living? Did Posei-  
don forget thee?
- Cir.* I pray you, Prince, remind me not of past foolish-  
ness. I have grown pious. I will never speak ill again

of authorities and divinities.

*Iol.* Thou art grown ascetic? thou carest no longer then for gold? I am glad, for my purse will be spared a very heavy lightening.

*Cir.* Prince, I will not suffer my young piety to make you break old promises; for if it is perilous to sin, it is worse to be the cause of sin in others.

*Iol.* Thou shalt have gold and farms. I will absolve Andromeda's promise and my own.

*Cir.* Great Plutus!

O happy Cireas!

*Iol.* Merchant Tyrnaus, art thou for Chaldea?

*Tyr.* When I have seen these troubles' joyous end  
And your sweet princess, my young rescuer,  
Happily wedded.

*Iol.* I will give thee a ship  
And merchandise enough to fill thy losses.

*Pers.* And prayers with them, O excellent Chaldean.  
The world has need of men like thee.

*Smer.* (*aside*)

I quake.

What will they say to me? I shall be tortured  
And crucified. But she with her smile will save me.

*Iol.* Smerdas, thou unclean treacherous coward soul!

*Smer.* Alas, I was compelled by threats of torture.

*Iol.* And tempted too with gold. Thy punishment  
Shall hit thee in thy nature. Farmer Cireas!

*Cir.* Prince Plutus!

*Iol.* Take thou this man for slave. He's strong.  
Work him upon thy fields and thy plantations.

*Smer.* O this is worst of all.

*Iol.* Not worse than thy desert.  
For gold thou lustest? earn it for another.

Thou'lt save thy life? it is a freedman's chattel.

*Smer.* O speak for me, lady Andromeda!

*Andr.* Dear Iolaus,—

*Ceph.* My child, thou art all pity;  
But justice has her seat, and her fine balance  
Disturbed too often spoils an unripe world  
With ill-timed mercy. Thy brother speaks my will.  
*Iol.* Thou hast increased thy crime by pleading to her  
Whom thou betrayed'st to her death. Art thou  
Quite shameless? Hold thy peace!

*Andr.* Grieve not too much.

Cireas will be kind to thee; wilt thou not, Cireas?  
*Cir.* At thy command I will be even that  
And even to him.

*Noise outside.*

*Ceph.* What other dangerous clamour  
Is at our gates?

*Perissus enters brandishing his cleaver.*

*Per.* Pull out that sharp skewer of thine, comrade  
Perseus, or let me handle my cleaver.

*Ceph.* Thou art angry, butcher? Who has disturbed thy  
noble serenity?

*Per.* King Cepheus, shall I not be angry? Art thou not  
again our majesty of Syria? And shall our majesty be  
insulted with noses? Shall it be prodded by a proboscis?  
Perseus, thou hast slaughtered yonder palæozoic ichthyo-  
saurus; wilt thou suffer me to chop this neozoan?

*Pers.* Calmly, precisely and not so polysyllabically, my  
good Perissus. Tell the King what is this clamour.

*Per.* My monarch, Phineus of Tyre has brought his long-  
nosed royalty to thy gates and poke it he will into thy kingly  
presence. His blusterings, King, have flustered my calm  
great heart within me.

*Ceph.* Comes he alone?

*Per.* Damoetes and some scores more hang on to his long  
tail of hook-nosed Tyrians; but they are all rabble and

proletariate, not a citizen butcher in the whole picking.  
They brandish skewers; they threaten to poke me with their  
dainty iron spits,—me, Perissus, me, the butcher!

*Ceph.* Phineus in arms! This is the after-swell  
Of tempest.

*Pers.* Let the Phœnician enter, comrade.

*Perissus goes out.*

Look not so blank. This man with all his crew  
Shall be my easy care.

*Phineus enters the hall with a great company,  
Tyrians with drawn swords, Damoetes, Morus and  
others: after them Perissus.*

*Ceph.* Welcome, Tyre.

*Cass.* Thou breakest armed into our presence, Phineus.  
Had they been earlier there, these naked swords  
Would have been welcome.

*Phin.* I am not here for welcome,  
Lady. King Cepheus, wilt thou yield me right,  
Or shall I take it with my sword?

*Ceph.* Phineus,  
I never have withheld even from the meanest,  
The least thing he could call his right.

*Phin.* Thou hast not?  
Who gives then to a wandering Greek my bride,  
Thy perfect daughter?

*Cass.* She was in some peril,  
When thou wert absent, Tyre.

*Phin.* A vain young man,  
A brilliant sworder wandering for a name,  
Who calls himself the son of Danaë,  
And who his father was, the midnight knows.  
This is the lord thou giv'st Andromeda,  
Scorning the mighty King of ancient Tyre.

*Ceph.* He saved her from the death to which we left her,  
And she was his,—his wife, if so he chose,

- Or, conquered by the sword from grim Poseidon,  
His then to take her as he would from that moment.
- Phin.* Do his deeds or thy neglect annul thy promise?
- Iol.* King Phineus, wilt thou take up and lay down  
At pleasure? Who leaves a jewel in the mud,  
Shall he complain because another took it?
- Prax.* And she was never his; she hated him.
- Phin.* I'll hear no reasons, but with strong force have her,  
Though it be to lift her o'er the dearest blood  
Of all her kin. Tyrians!

*(Andromeda takes refuge with Perseus.)*

- Abandon, princess,  
The stripling bosom where thou tak'st thy refuge.  
Thou hast mistook thy home, Andromeda.
- Iol.* 'Tis thou mistakest, Phineus, thinking her  
A bride who, touched, shall be thy doom. Get hence  
Unhurt.
- Phin.* Prince Iolaus, the sword that cut  
Thy contract to Poseidon, cuts not mine,—  
Which if you void, thou and thy father pay for it.
- Pers.* Phineus of Tyre, it may be thou art wronged,  
But 'tis not at his hands whom thou impugnest;  
Her father gave her not to me.
- Phin.* Her mother then?  
She is the man, I think, in Syria's household.
- Pers.* Her too I asked not.
- Phin.* Thou wooedst then the maid?  
It shall not help thee though a thousand times  
She kissed thee yes. Pretty Andromeda,  
Wilt thou have for thy lord this vagabond,  
Wander with him as beggars land and sea?  
Despite thyself I'll save thee from that fate  
Unworthy of thy beauty and thy sweetness,  
And make thee Queen in Tyre. Minion of Argos,



Learn, ere thou grasp at other's goods, to ask  
The owner, not the owned.

*Pers.* I did not ask her.

*Phin.* Then by what right, presumptuous, hast thou her?  
Or wherefore lies she thus within thy arm?

*Pers.* Say, by what right, King Phineus, thou wouldst take  
her,  
Herself and all refusing?

*Phin.* By my precontract.

*Pers.* Thou gavest her to Death, that contract's broken.  
Or if thou seekest to revoke thy gift,  
Foregather then with Death and ask him for her.  
The way to him is easy.

*Phin.* Then by my sword,  
Not asking her or any, because I am a king,  
I'll take her.

*Pers.* If the sword is the sole judge,  
Then by my own sword I have taken her, Tyrian,  
Not asking her or any, who am king  
O'er her, her sovereign. This soft gold is mine  
And mine these banks of silver; this rich country  
Is my possession and owes to my strong taking  
All her sweet revenues in honey. Phineus,  
I wonder not that thou dost covet her  
Whom the whole world might want. Wrest her from me,  
Phoenician, to her father she belongs not.

*(opening his wallet)*

King Phineus, art thou ready? Yet look once more  
On the blue sky and this green earth of Syria.

*Phin.* Young man, thou hast done deeds I'll not belittle.  
Yet was it only a sea-beast and a rabble  
Whom thou hast tamed; I am a prince and warrior.  
Wilt thou fright me with thy ægis?

*Pers.* Not fright, but end thee;

For thou hast spoken words deserving death.  
Come forth into the open, this is no place  
For battle. Marshal thy warlike crew against me,  
And let thy Syrian mob-men help with shouts:  
Stand in their front to lead them; I alone  
Will meet their serried charge, Dercetes merely  
Watching us.

*Phin.* Thou art frantic with past triumphs:  
Argive, desist. I would not rob thy mother  
Of her sole joy, howe'er she came by thee.  
The gods may punish her sweet midnight fault,  
To whom her dainty trickery imputes it.

*Pers.* Come now, lest here I slay thee.

*Phin.* Thou art in love  
With death: but I am pitiful, young Perseus,  
Thou shalt not die. My men shall take thee living  
And pedlars hawk thee for a slave in Tyre,  
Where thou shalt see sometimes far off Andromeda,  
A Queen of nations.

*Pers.* Thou compassionate man!  
But I will give thee, hero, marvellous death  
And stone for monument, which thou deservest;  
For thou wert a great King and famous warrior,  
When still thou wert living. Forth and fight with me!  
Afterwards if thou canst, come for Andromeda;  
None shall oppose thy seizure. Behind me, captain,  
So that the rabble here may not be tempted  
To any treacherous stroke.

*Phineus goes out with the Tyrians, Damoetes  
and the Syrian favourers of Phineus, followed by Perseus  
and Dercetes. Cereas behind them at a distance.*

*Ceph.* Sunbeam, I am afraid.

*Andr.* I am not, father.

*Ceph.* Alone against so many!

- Iol.* Shall I go, father,  
And stand by him?
- Ceph.* He might be angry. Hark!  
The voice of Phineus.
- Iol.* He cries some confident order.
- Ceph.* The Tyrians shout for onset; he is doomed.  
*There is a moment's pause, all listening painfully.*
- Iol.* The shouts are stilled; there is a sudden hush.
- Ceph.* What can it mean? This silence is appalling.  
*Dercetes returns.*
- What news? Thou treadest like one sleeping, captain.
- Derc.* O King, thy royal court is full of monuments.
- Ceph.* What meanest thou? What happened? Where is Perseus?
- Derc.* King Phineus called to his men to take alive  
The Greek; but as they charged, great Perseus cried,  
"Close eyes, Dercetes, if thou car'st to live,"  
And I obeyed, yet saw that he had taken  
A snaky something from the wallet's mouth  
He carries in his baldric. Blind I waited  
And heard the loud approaching charge. Then suddenly  
The rapid onset ceased, the cries fell dumb  
And a great silence reigned. Astonishment  
For two brief moments only held me close;  
But when I lifted my sealed lids, the court  
Was full of those swift charging warriors stiffened  
To stone or stiffening, in the very posture  
Of onset, sword uplifted, shield advanced,  
Knee crooked, foot carried forward to the pace,  
An animated silence, life in stone.  
Only the godlike victor lived, a smile  
Upon his lips, closing his wallet's mouth.  
Then I, appalled, came from that place in silence.
- Ceph.* Soldier, he is a god, or else the gods  
Walk close to him. I hear his footsteps coming,

Hail, Perseus!

*Perseus returns, followed by Cereas.*

*Pers.* King, the Tyrians all are dead,  
Nor need'st thou build them pyres nor dig them graves.  
If any hereafter ask what perfect sculptor  
Chiselled these forms in Syria's royal court,  
Say then, "Athene, child armipotent  
Of the Olympian, hewed by Perseus' hand  
In one divine and careless stroke these statues.  
To her give glory."

*Ceph.* O thou dreadful victor!  
I know not what to say nor how to praise thee.

*Pers.* Say nothing, King; in silence praise the Gods.  
Let this not trouble you, my friends. Proceed  
As if no interruption had disturbed you.

*Cir.* O Zeus, I thought thou couldst juggle only with  
feathers and phosphorus, but I see thou canst give wrinkles  
in magic to Babylon and the Medes. (*shaking himself*) I  
cannot feel sure yet that I am not myself a statue. Ugh!  
this was a stony conjuring.

*Per.* (*who has gone out and returned*)

What hast thou done, comrade Perseus? Thou hast  
immortalised his long nose to all time in stone! This is a  
woeful thing for posterity; thou hadst no right to leave  
behind thee for its dismay such a fossil.

*Ceph.* What now is left but to prepare the nuptials  
Of sweet young sunny-eyed Andromeda  
With mighty Perseus?

*Pers.* King, let it be soon

. That I may go to my blue-ringed Seriphos,  
Where my mother waits, and more deeds call to me.

*Cass.* Yet if thy heart consents, then three months give us,  
O Perseus, of thyself and our sweet child,  
And then abandon.

*Pers.* They are given.

*Andr.* Perseus,  
You give and never ask; let me for you  
Ask something.

*Pers.* Ask, Andromeda, and have.

*Andr.* Then this I ask that thy great deeds may leave  
Their golden trace on Syria. Let the dire cult  
For ever cease and victims bleed no more  
On its dark altar. Instead Athene's name  
Spread over all the land and in men's hearts.  
Then shall a calm and mighty Will prevail  
And broader minds and kindlier manners reign  
And men grow human, mild and merciful.

*Pers.* King Cepheus, thou hast heard; shall this be done?

*Ceph.* Hero, thou camest to change our world for us.  
Pronounce; I give assent.

*Pers.* Then let the shrine  
That looked out from earth's breast into the sunlight,  
Be cleansed of its red memory of blood,  
And the dread Form that lived within its precincts  
Transfigure into a bright compassionate God  
Whose strength shall aid men tossed upon the seas.  
Give succour to the shipwrecked mariner.  
A noble centre of a people's worship,  
To Zeus and great Athene build a temple  
Between your sky-topped hills and Ocean's vasts:  
Her might shall guard your lives and save your land.  
In your human image of her deity  
A light of reason and calm celestial force  
And a wise tranquil government of life,  
Order and beauty and harmonious thoughts  
And, ruling the waves of impulse, high-throned will  
Incorporate in marble, the carved and white  
Ideal of a young uplifted race.  
For these are her gifts to those who worship her.

- Adore and what you adore attempt to be.  
*Ceph.* Will the fiercer Grandeur that was here permit?  
*Pers.* Fear not Poseidon; the strong god is free.  
He has withdrawn from his own darkness and is now  
His new great self at an Olympian height.  
*Cass.* How can the immortal gods and Nature change?  
*Pers.* All alters in a world that is the same.  
Man most must change who is a soul of Time;  
His gods too change and live in larger light.  
*Ceph.* Then man too may arise to greater heights,  
His being draw nearer to the gods?  
*Pers.* Perhaps.  
But the blind nether forces still have power  
And the ascent is slow and long is Time.  
Yet shall Truth grow and harmony increase:  
The day shall come when men feel close and one.  
Meanwhile one forward step is something gained,  
Since little by little earth must open to heaven  
Till her dim soul awakes into the Light.









